

THE Christian CENTURY

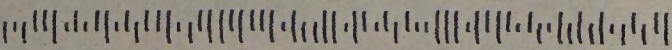
Thinking Critically, Living Faithfully

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A time for change

THERE IS A TIME for everything, the preacher in Ecclesiastes observed. It is now time for new leadership at the CHRISTIAN CENTURY. I have told the CENTURY's board of trustees of my intention to retire as editor/publisher as of December 31.

I've loved my association with the magazine since I became editor/publisher in February 1999. The CHRISTIAN CENTURY has been a reliable and invaluable resource and companion since I first started reading the journal in divinity school and as a young pastor in the early 1960s. Over the years I relied on it to tell me what was happening in theology, biblical ethics, and the global church. I depended on the CENTURY for book recommendations. I looked to it for thoughtful Christian social commentary, whether the topic was civil rights, poverty, war, or the conflicts in the Middle East.

It's been a great honor and privilege to have my name on the masthead. One of the first things I did when I started at the CENTURY was to arrange for photos of Reinhold Niebuhr and Martin Luther King Jr. to be displayed in the lobby alongside quotations from articles that they wrote for the CENTURY. Every

time I come to work I'm reminded of whose footsteps we seek to follow.

A wonderful dimension to my work has been hearing from and meeting many loyal CENTURY readers. I've come to regard the readership as a national—and international—community of faithful inquiry, engaged in an ongoing conversation about critical issues.

The best part of my job has been the association with the remarkable individuals who constitute the staff and who turn out a lively, attractive, and thoughtful magazine every two weeks. I'm grateful beyond words for them.

Some time ago the magazine defined its mission in a phrase: helping Christians to "think critically and live faithfully." That mission is more important than ever.

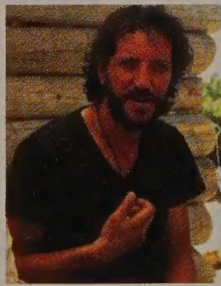
People of faith need an authentic, thoughtful, dialogical voice in the midst of a cacophony of extremist religious and political rhetoric. And the culture needs to hear from a Christian voice that is intellectually alive, a creative partner in conversations about justice, peace, and a sustainable future. Whatever changes lie ahead, the magazine remains committed to being that voice of faith for many years to come.

UNLIKELY PARTNERS FOR PEACE

An Orthodox settler and a Palestinian activist say reconciliation begins with seeing the humanity of your enemy. Come hear them tell their stories.



Rabbi **Hanan Schlesinger** divides his time between Israel and the United States. In North Texas he teaches adult education classes on Judaism and spearheads interfaith projects. In Israel he helps lead Roots, a grassroots initiative for understanding, nonviolence, and reconciliation, which he helped establish.



Ali Abu Awwad is a Palestinian activist who teaches nonviolent resistance and reaches out to Jewish Israelis. He tours the world to tell his riveting story of violent activism, imprisonment, bereavement, and the discovery of the path of nonviolent resistance. Ali says, "The path to Palestinian freedom should run through Jewish hearts and minds."

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IN THIS Issue

-
- 6** **Letters**
Limits of welcome
- 7** **Loving the refugee**
The Editors: Where do the Syrians go?
- 8** **CenturyMarks**
Buddhists in a frat house, etc.
- 10** **The mosque next door**
Heidi Haverkamp: Getting to know our Muslim neighbors
- 12** **What Google doesn't know**
Katherine Willis Pershey: Lessons from the Ashley Madison hack
- 22** **China's gospel valley**
Lian Xi: Churches thrive among the Lisu people
- 26** **Israel's dreams and nightmares**
David Heim: Author Yossi Klein Halevi
- 30** **United in suffering**
Kathryn Greene-McCreight: Martyrdom as Christian vocation

NEWS

- 14** Building relationships across racial lines;
Square in Rome named after Martin Luther;
Liberia debates amendment declaring country to be a
Christian nation;
Southern Baptist missions to lay off up to 800 people

IN REVIEW

- 36 Books**
M. T. Dávila: *Stand Your Ground*, by Kelly Brown Douglas
Daniel José Camacho: *Between the World and Me*, by Ta-
Nehisi Coates
Zachary Moon: *Afterwar*, by Nancy Sherman
Robert D. Cornwall: *How to Read the Bible*, by Harvey Cox
- 43 Media**
Jason Byassee: Screen time
- 47 Art**
Lil Copan: *Raziel*, by Richard Carson

COLUMNS

- 3 Editor's Desk**
John M. Buchanan: A time for change
- 20, 21 Living by the Word**
Hardy Kim
- 35 Faith Matters**
Stephanie Paulsell: Words that count
- 45 Notes from the Global Church**
Philip Jenkins: The Adventist adaptation

POETRY

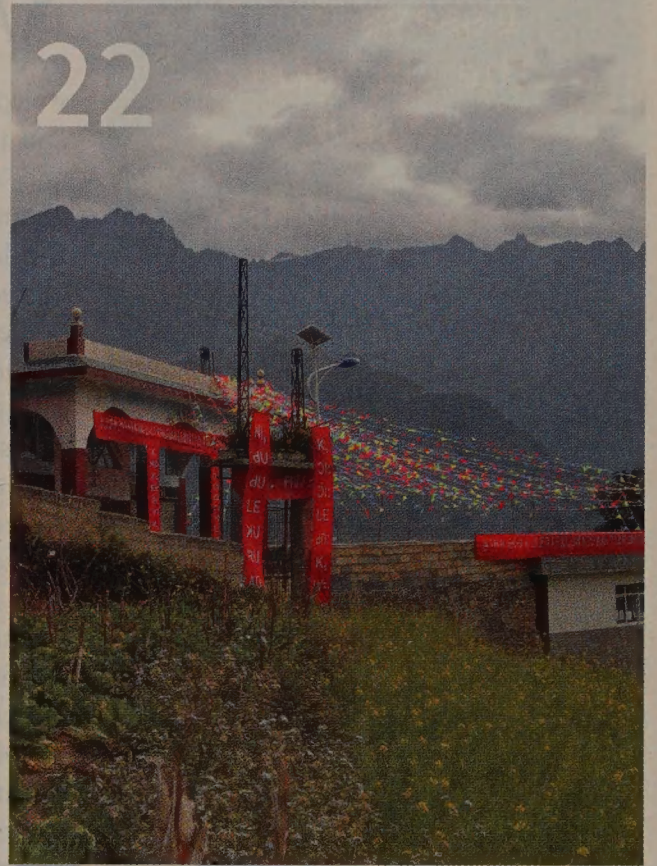
- 10 Angela Alaimo O'Donnell:** The still pilgrim makes dinner
- 12 Warren L. Molton:** Whatta ya say?
- 13 Christine Hemp:** A necessary slaughter
- 28 Nola Garrett:** Praise the one that breaks the darkness

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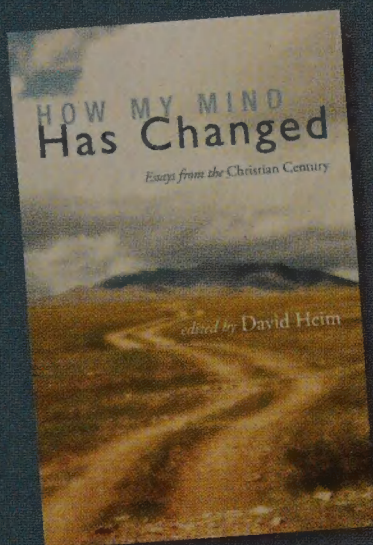
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HOW MY MIND HAS CHANGED

Essays from
the *Christian
Century*



**13 prominent
Christian theologians
speak of their
journeys of faith
and of the questions
that have shaped
their writing and
scholarship.**

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—L. Gregory Jones, Duke Divinity School



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LETTERS

Limits of welcome

While I appreciate Lisa Fischbeck's sorrow at having to evict Vicky from worship ("Limits of welcome," Aug. 19), Vicky made threats and told people they were going to hell, and she could have acted to bring that about in her mind. There are people who would not hesitate to translate their hatred into violent action.

Several years ago, a visitor appeared in the narthex of our church in military fatigues and stood there with his arms crossed. I walked up to him and said our ushers should have let him know he could take a seat in any pew he chose. He told me, "I'm here to observe." I replied that we didn't have "observers" at worship. He could choose to be seated, or he could leave. He chose to leave.

Given what happened at Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, we can't afford to be naive and put parishioners at risk. When red flags go up in our minds, we need to be ready to take action, including calling for help if need be. There are indeed limits of welcome, and there's every reason to be vigilant.

Edward R. Schreiber
Saugerties, N.Y.

Thank you for highlighting this issue and recognizing that we don't, collectively, have a right answer. I don't pretend to know what to do with a Vicky, but I doubt Vicky's problem is poor theology or meanness. I'm betting Vicky is ill. Perhaps congregation members need to know that when people are being mean to them it is not always about them.

We were once told there is a danger in "psychologizing" everything we see. I think there is some danger in the other direction.

Taryn Mattice
Ithaca, N.Y.

I've served three churches, and I have done my best to minister to people coping with (among other things) depression, alcoholism, sex addiction, anger management issues, obsessive-

compulsive disorder, schizophrenia, the need to control, and just plain mean-spiritedness. Let's face it, pastors are outnumbered (as Jesus was) by people in various stages of hurt and brokenness.

We will never have all the answers. All we can really do is make every decision to protect our flock with as much love and Christlike compassion as possible. Whatever result comes afterward is in God's gracious hands.

Fred Gagnon
Scarborough, Me.

This is an important conversation as the church evolves to be more and more open, inclusive, and Jesus-centered. How does the local church engage people with love and grace who seek, whether from intention or mental health problems, to be disrupters?

A significant number of people without mental health concerns embrace what might be called a lifeboat theology. Although well meaning, they take an end-of-the-world worldview and try to spread the word at any cost. Their motivation may be more about sin, hell, and judgment than love.

Monica Cross
christiancentury.org comment

Works of the Lord . . .

In his fine article "Scientists welcome" (Aug. 5), David Wood misquoted the Latin text of Psalm 111:2 ("Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them"), which should be "Magna opera Domini, exquisita in omnes voluntates ejus." Also, the reference to Xavier Le Pichon descending to the floor of the Pacific is inaccurate. The dive referred to was not, at the time, the deepest attempted by a human being. Rather, it was the first dive by a scientist to the depth of 10,000 feet in the Mid-Atlantic Ridge rift valley.

George Harper
Manila, Philippines

September 30, 2015

Loving the refugee

When thousands of refugees from Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East risked their lives to make it to Hungary, fleeing war in their homelands, the country's prime minister declared that he needed to secure his nation's borders so as "to keep Europe Christian." The migrants "have been raised in another religion," said Viktor Orbán, "and represent a radically different culture."

Few things would better reflect a deeply Christian culture than showing hospitality to these desperate strangers. Concern for the stranger is embedded in scripture. "The Lord your God . . . loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing," says Deuteronomy 10:18. The book of Hebrews, recalling a text from Genesis, says, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it."

The world is in the midst of perhaps the greatest refugee crisis of the modern age, with over 50 million displaced persons—the greatest number since World War II. European countries face a considerable challenge in coordinating the reception of refugees and finding a proportional way to share the burden—but it is a challenge they can meet. Turkey and Lebanon are already hosting more than 1 million displaced Syrians, and Iraq, Egypt, and Jordan are each hosting hundreds of thousands of refugees.

Some regions are conspicuously absent in responding to the crisis. Amnesty International points out that the rich Gulf countries—Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Bahrain, which are located near the crisis region and have funded some of the groups fighting in Syria—have offered no resettlement places to Syrian refugees. Wealthy countries like Russia, Japan, Singapore, and South Korea have also failed to respond.

The United States is one of the top funders of relief aid to refugees, sending some \$4 billion to the region. But so far its resettlement of Syrians has been meager. Since the civil war in Syria began, fewer than 1,000 Syrians have been admitted.

President Obama could and should expand the target number for admitting Syrian refugees when he sets the refugee ceiling in the coming weeks. Congress should take up a bill, called Protecting Religious Minorities Persecuted by ISIS, which would expedite asylum applications from Syrians and Iraqis.

But government is not the only actor in the crisis, though it is a crucial one. Pope Francis underscored that truth when he directed the Vatican to take in two refugee families and called on parishes and monasteries to do the same.

The wrenching dislocations of World War II were often pitilessly ignored by the world. Nevertheless, many citizens of the United States and other countries tell stories about how governments and religious agencies intervened to help their families start new lives—lives that have enriched and diversified nations and local cultures. What story will be told of our time, and of us?

Few things would better reflect Christian culture than hospitality to strangers.

CENTURY marks

BOOK COLLECTOR: For 20 years, José Gutierrez, a garbage truck driver in Bogotá, Colombia, has been rescuing books from upper class neighborhoods. He turned his own modest house in a poor neighborhood into a community library, which by now has some 20,000 volumes stacked from floor to ceiling. Known in Colombia as “Lord of the Books,” he attributes his own love of reading to his mother, who read stories to him every night when he was a child. Gutierrez’s favorite books include *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by his Nobel Prize-winning fellow countryman Gabriel García Márquez (AP).

AT REST: Oliver Sacks, neurologist and writer about the quirks of the brain, grew up in a strictly observant Orthodox Jewish family. When he was 18 his mother found out he was gay and

told him she wished he had never been born. As an adult he chose not to follow the religion and rituals of his parents. But eventually Sacks came to see the value of sabbath observance. As he lay dying, he found his “thoughts drifting to the sabbath, the day of rest, the seventh day of the week, and perhaps the seventh day of one’s life as well, when one can feel that one’s work is done, and one may, in good conscience, rest.” Sacks died in August (*New York Times*, August 14).

OPEN DOORS: Icelanders have not been happy at what they consider a tepid response by their government to the refugee crisis in Europe, many coming from war-torn Syria. After the government said it would restrict the number of refugees it would accept to 50, more than 12,000 people responded to a

petition on Facebook demanding that the government be more welcoming. Many of the petitioners offered to host refugees in their own homes. The Global Peace Index recently ranked Iceland as the most peaceful country in the world and Syria the least peaceful (*Guardian*, September 1).

FRAT LIFE: San Diego State University is likely the first campus in the United States to open a Buddhist-sponsored fraternity and a sorority. They are the brainchild of a Buddhist temple in San Diego, which has been offering courses and meditation on campus for the past six years. “Instead of a keg, we’ll have a meditation room,” the founder said. Life in these Greek-lettered houses will attempt to integrate generosity, morality, patience, diligence, concentration, and wisdom into their academic and social lives. Community service will be promoted (*Lion’s Roar*, August 30).

ANCIENT TEXT: Fragments of the Qur’an found at Birmingham University may be the world’s oldest. Written on sheep- or goatskin, carbon dating done at Oxford University places the fragments somewhere between AD 568 and 645. It is quite possible that the person who wrote them lived during the life of Muhammad and may have even known the Prophet. Muslim tradition maintains that Muhammad received the revelations that form the Qur’an between 610 and 632, the year he died (BBC, July 22).

FORMER CATHOLICS: Nearly half of all former Catholics have left institutionalized religion altogether, according to a recent PRRI/RNS survey. Among former Catholics, 14 percent identify



“First, I’ll read the minutes from your last weddings.”

themselves as white, evangelical Protestants, and 9 percent as mainline Protestants. This cohort is more likely to be young, male, and politically liberal or independent. Former Catholics are also less likely to say their views of the Catholic Church have changed since the advent of Pope Francis. They do share similar views with Catholics on climate change, immigration reform, and same-sex marriage, although they are more liberal on legalizing abortion in all or most cases (PRRI, September 3).

CASUALTY OF WAR: Civil War historian Allen Guelzo asks, “Did religion make the American Civil War worse?” Religion was certainly used on both sides to make the case for what each considered a noble cause. Guelzo turns the question around, maintaining that the war and its aftermath made things worse for religion in America. The devastation and outcome of the war itself showed the “shortcomings of religious absolutism,” and ever since, religious absolutism has been deprived of power to address social problems in America, especially economic and racial ones. Religion subsequently retreated into “a world of private experience in which Christianity remained of little more significance to public life than stamp collecting or bridge parties” (*Atlantic*, August 23).

TRUTH FOR SURE: George Johnson says modern culture is reaching the point at which there are no longer any incontrovertible truths, just competing ideologies and narratives. He points to people offended by the findings of science, from evolution to climate change, and to those who fall for conspiracy theories about vaccination and fluoridation. Another example: some native Hawaiians are protesting the placement of a new telescope on Mauna Kea, saying that it would desecrate a holy mountain where Sky Father and Earth Mother gave birth to humankind. When Johnson pointed out last fall that there are already 13 telescopes on that mountain, he heard from young anthropologists who protested that science is just another way for Westerners to further their cultural hegemony of marginalized peoples (*New York Times*, August 25).

“Everything I was dreaming of is gone. I want to bury my children and sit beside them until I die.”

— **Abdullah Kurdi**, Syrian refugee and father of the two-year-old boy whose picture of his dead body on a beach was widely publicized on social media. Abdullah lost another son and his wife in an attempt to get to Canada via Europe [CNN, September 3].

“We have to ask ourselves: What do we need to do to stop this insanity? In my case, the answer is: ‘Whatever it takes.’”

— **Andy Parker**, whose daughter was shot and killed on live TV, vowing to spend the rest of his life fighting for better gun control laws [*Washington Post*, August 30].

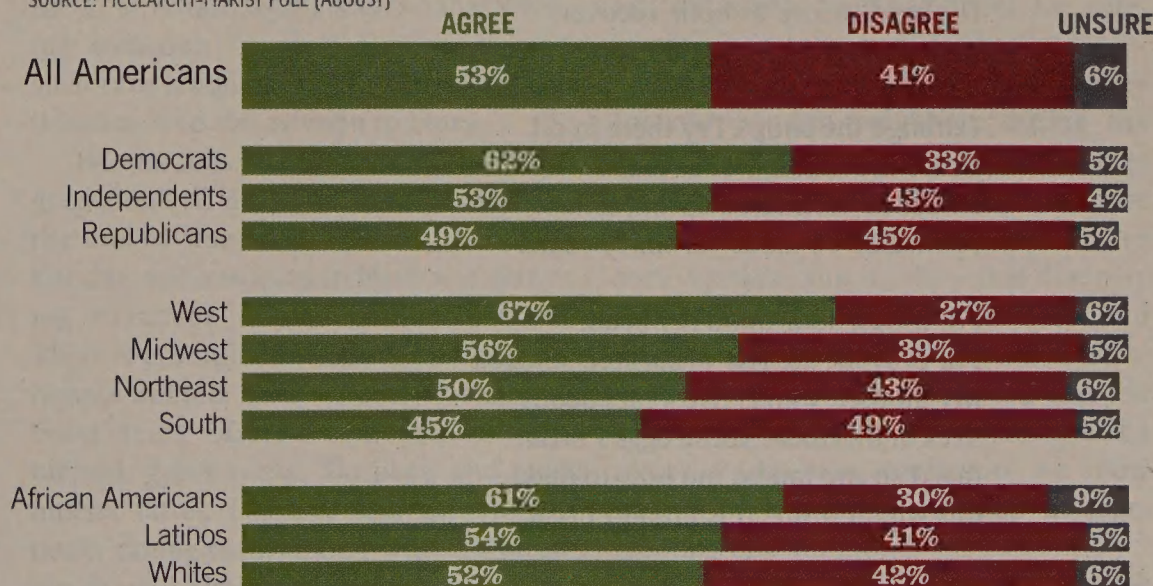
BE NOT OFFENDED: Some Duke University students are refusing to read the graphic novel *Fun Home*, sent to all incoming members of the class of 2019. They say its explicit sexual themes and images conflict with their religious values. Some academic observers see this as part of a larger cultural shift from maintaining political correctness to enforcing empathetic correctness. The first trend is motivated by a desire not to offend, the second by a wish not to be offended. Religion is not the only motivation behind this trend. Writing under a pseudonym last June, a professor confessed, “I’m a liberal professor, and my liberal students terrify me” (*Christian Science Monitor*, August 25).

DARK CLOUD IN WACO: Baylor University, a Baptist institution in Texas,

has a dark cloud hanging over its football program. Evidence suggests that the university may have known that one of its players was suspended from Boise State because of violent behavior. That same player, Samuel Ukwuachu, was recently found guilty of sexual assault—the second such conviction against a Baylor football player in two years. Baylor’s coach denies knowing about Ukwuachu’s history, but the head coach at Boise State claims he fully appraised Baylor of the reasons the player was being let go at Boise. This case happened a decade after a Baylor basketball player was shot and killed by a teammate. Kenneth Starr, Baylor’s president and former special prosecutor in the case leading to President Clinton’s impeachment, did not make himself available for an interview (*Inside Higher Ed*, August 26).

A NATION DIVIDED

SOURCE: MCCLATCHY-MARIST POLL (AUGUST)



Due to rounding, totals may not equal 100%.

The mosque next door

by Heidi Haverkamp

LAST SPRING our church paid a call on our neighbors at Masjid al-Jumu'ah, the new mosque in town. We live in Bolingbrook, a fast-growing suburb of 73,000 residents 30 miles southwest of Chicago. To the surprise of many of my city friends, a fifth of my neighbors out here in these cornfields-turned-subdivisions are African American, a quarter are Latino, and more than a tenth are of Asian descent. People here like to say, "Our block is like the United Nations!"

Diversity is not new in Bolingbrook, and Muslims are not a hidden population. Students in headscarves attend the high school; big-box grocery stores boast Middle Eastern and Indian aisles; a *halal* market does brisk business. For 25 years the mayor has enthusiastically participat-

ed in the annual Pakistan Independence Day celebration.

But when Muslims purchased a foreclosed church building in Bolingbrook, a colleague told me that pastors in our local clergy association were concerned. One suggested that demonic forces were at work. I began to imagine protesters holding angry signs and writing inflamed letters to the editor.

Thankfully, nothing happened. Bolingbrook's tolerance for difference prevailed. Then, in October 2014, the Muslim community received some unwelcome attention when a local Muslim teenager was arrested at O'Hare Airport: the 19-year-old and his two siblings were carrying tickets to Turkey and seemed to be on their way to Syria to join ISIS. The news coverage was explosive. His parents were

shown on TV, his mother weeping in her hijab.

Dramatic incidents like this distract us from the fact that Islam is becoming a normal part of American suburban life. Yes, it's true that some Muslim teenagers and young adults have been recruited online to join the terrorist organization that calls itself the Islamic State. It's also true that Muslims have been killed in their own homes in Raleigh and Dallas, and that North American Muslim families and congregations are targeted for harassment and hate crimes even though most of them are living ordinary lives.

In the spring, two members of our church, St. Benedict, called up the leaders at Masjid al-Jumu'ah and asked if some Episcopalians could pay a visit. The leaders responded with warmth and excitement, and a month later 25 of us Episcopalians gathered in their parking lot. We wanted to be gracious visitors, so we women covered our hair with scarves and the men wore long pants.

The still pilgrim makes dinner

It's Mother's Day and I have no mother.
She left and took my daughterhood.
It's hard to lose us both, recover.
A double grief. A day to brood.

I dredge the chops. Fry them in oil.
I slice the onion, wet as tears.
I wear my sackcloth apron, soiled
by meals I've made for thirty years.

For ashes, flour upon my head.
For prayers, the rise of scented smoke.
My mother, who is five years dead,
lives in this meat, these eggs I broke,
this dish she taught me how to make,
this wine I drink, this bread I break.

Angela Alaimo O'Donnell

The lobby looked like our narthex at St. Benedict. Tables and bulletin boards were covered with flyers advertising activities, volunteer opportunities, children's programs, and a capital campaign. There was a large, shiny metal box with four slots marked: Suggestions, *Zakah* (tithed giving, one of Islam's Five Pillars), *Sadaqa* (free offerings), and Masjid Donation (the building fund). Below the box were pledge postcards with the words "Charity Does Not Decrease Wealth." One of my church leaders showed me the postcards, raising an eyebrow as if to say, "This is brilliant, and we're stealing the idea." She tucked the card in her purse.

We gathered in the gym, the men and

women sitting separately. Three imams and a board member, Aamer, put on a program for us. Two imams wore traditional tunics and skullcaps. The Muslim women stood in the back of the room in their hijabs and long dresses.

My parishioners asked all kinds of questions. The Muslims were passionate (and understandably defensive) when asked about politically charged issues like the Bolingbrook teenager, images of Muhammad, and ISIS. When asked whether they had experienced harassment or vandalism, Aamer thought for a moment and shrugged. “Nothing major,” he said.

When someone asked why more Muslims don’t speak up against the radical few, one of the imams told us that when the shootings at *Charlie Hebdo* occurred, he was in Dallas and helped organize a vigil in response to the attack. He was delighted to see TV cameras arrive, and the crew filmed the peaceful, interfaith gathering for over two hours. But when the imam turned on the news that evening, the only coverage was of furious, anti-Muslim protesters. We could see the disappointment and humiliation on his face as he told us about the incident.

One result of our visit: we now pray for our Muslim neighbors.

When we were invited to stay for lunch, a few of us exchanged eager glances—maybe we would be served homemade falafel, biryani, or curry? I hopefully sniffed the air. But then we saw women carrying pizza boxes. I was disappointed, but touched that our hosts served us with our tastes and culture in mind. We were confused when they didn’t join us, but perhaps the pizzeria was not *halal*.

After the program, one of the imams invited me to speak. I thanked the people for their warm hospitality, wished

*Heidi Haverkamp is vicar and priest of the Episcopal Church of St. Benedict in Bolingbrook, Illinois. Her book *Advent in Narnia: Reflections on the Season* was just published by Westminster John Knox.*



MUSLIM CELEBRATION: A fire truck at Masjid al-Jumu’ah in Bolingbrook, Illinois, provides entertainment for children at the annual Eid al-Fitr festival.

them a good Ramadan, and invited them to visit us at St. Benedict. I added that they probably knew a lot more about Christian culture than we did about Muslim culture, since they lived surrounded by Christian churches.

As we prepared to leave, a young woman came over in tears. “Thank you for what you said! That you would say,

tered in groups. Three men helped our group find food, waving away our offers to pay for our meal tickets.

One of them, Ali, told me he’d read a blog post that I wrote when we were planning our first visit. I thought that on their website they had called their driveway “Biryani Drive,” which I said was great fun. When Ali told me that the website was actually referring to a biryani food drive, collecting pans of the rice dish for a fund-raiser, I laughed out loud.

An imam explained that the carnival was a way for the mosque’s children to see that Islam offers not only prayer and spiritual discipline, but also a way to have fun and to celebrate. He hoped the Eid carnival would help them not to feel left out when their neighbors are celebrating Christmas and Easter.

As a result of our visits, we now pray for our Muslim neighbors during the Prayers of the People, tag one another on Facebook, and look forward to more conversation, biryani, and pizza. We see—up close and locally—that diversity and community can mix in rich and expansive ways when we give one another the benefit of the doubt, and that too often, even or especially as members of a majority Christian community, we allow fear or awkwardness to keep us from meeting one another.

All it took was a phone call.

CC

What Google doesn't know

by Katherine Willis Pershey

I REMEMBER discovering, years ago, that Google's default setting is to preserve one's entire online search history. I immediately disabled the feature. I didn't want to know. I preferred the search box in the corner of my web browser to function as a gateway to oblivion. Whether a query was a work-related bit of research, a tell-tale sign of procrastination, or evidence of embarrassing curiosity, I did not want to face the long and absurd list of things for which I had searched.

The existence of this search history gave me a glimpse of something I've since come to understand more deeply, as the years pass and I amass more log-ins and apps and "friends": the Internet knows me very, very well.

And the Internet is astounding, isn't it? You can FaceTime the grandparents. You can locate Bible verses, slow-cooker recipes, sports scores, and the symptoms of fibromyalgia, mitochondrial disease,

equally passionate about rat terriers, the Avett Brothers, typography. You can tweet #blacklivesmatter. You can watch pandas sneeze and episodes of *Family Ties*. You can get stuck on the 117th level

Do our online histories reveal our true selves?

and yeast infection. You can generate driving directions from Tallahassee, Florida, to Sioux City, Iowa. You can Google "mushrooms growing out of showerhead," "is pokeweed poisonous," "Taylor Swift Lisa Kudrow smelly cat." You can find other people who are

of Candy Crush. You can uncover the digestive effects of eating escolar at the sushi bar without having to weather an extremely awkward conversation with another human being.

Lest we forget that it's not all cat videos and convenience, you can also propagate hate on white supremacist sites. You can access pornography calibrated to titillate any proclivity under the sun. You can get radicalized and make arrangements to travel to Syria to join ISIS. You can upload images of violence and degradation so unthinkable that the people employed to review these images suffer from posttraumatic stress. You can cyberbully adolescents. You can sign up for a website that purports to connect you discreetly to locals interested in torrid extramarital affairs.

You can do all this on the Internet, yet the Internet is not all-powerful. For starters: it cannot promise privacy, and it cannot guarantee security.

The recent hack of the Ashley Madison website and the subsequent release of its user data exposed a lot of people who had done an incredibly dumb and immoral thing. The online service's purpose is to connect people looking for an extramarital affair. The exposed data included a disconcerting number of .mil, .gov, and .edu e-mail addresses, and

Whatta ya say?

If God is that small space
left at the table, then go ahead
and sit there if you like.
Even if you weren't invited,
that doesn't mean you aren't welcome.
Perhaps you were just overlooked,
missed, as in
they would have missed you
and wished you were here
if you hadn't come . . .
not forgotten
only misplaced when places were set.
Yes, there,
wedge into that spot where John leans away
to rest his head on Jesus . . . right next to Judas,
where perhaps you'll have time
to whisper in his ear, or even chat a moment,
just small talk you understand
until supper starts.

Warren L. Molton

Christianity Today blogger Ed Stetzer estimated that around 400 pastors would resign once they were outed as Ashley Madison customers. Publicly and privately, many people are grappling with disillusionment, betrayal, and heartbreak as the site's users fall hard and fast from grace.

The reaction to the hack has been fairly predictable. There has been a frantic search for familiar names; infamy is much more fun when the culprit is already famous. There has been schadenfreude, especially in response to perhaps the most brazenly hypocritical offender: reality TV star, former Family Research Council staffer, and alleged child molester Josh Duggar. There has been hand-wringing about the moral bankruptcy bespoken by an adultery site with 32 million users. There has even been find-the-silver-lining talk: in a recent post for *Think Christian*, a site funded by the Christian Reformed Church, Kory Plockmeyer celebrates that "the predominant reaction [to the hack]—even beyond the church—is that marriage is to be sacrosanct between spouses."

One common response appears to be humility, an admission that we are all sinners. After the hack, R. C. Sproul Jr. confessed publicly that he had visited the site. A month earlier, the conservative theologian wrote, "We are all sinners, and we are all, in ourselves, justly under the wrath of God, and we will all give an answer for all that we've done, all that we've said, all that we've thought, and for every website we have visited." It's like the story in John's Gospel of the woman caught in adultery. The only difference is that there are a great many more potential targets as we ponder whether we really have the moral credibility to throw the first stone.

A few years ago, Tim Kreider wrote this for the *New York Times*:

I've often thought that the single most devastating cyberattack a diabolical and anarchic mind could design would not be on the military or financial sector but simply to simultane-

ously make every e-mail and text ever sent universally public. It would be like suddenly subtracting the strong nuclear force from the universe; the fabric of society would instantly evaporate, every marriage, friendship and business partnership dissolved.

An utterly chilling thought, isn't it? It makes the Ashley Madison hack look quaint in comparison. I have certainly said and done things in one context that would be troublesome in another. I suspect that my private e-mails, made public, could undo me in a quick minute.

We affirm a right to privacy, yet privacy is largely an illusion. As Sproul rightly if unwisely pontificated, we hide nothing from God. Ironically, the Internet, in becoming such a powerful force in our lives, illustrates this—albeit as a mere idol. If you took the sum total of every-

thing the Internet knows about any one user—search history, website memberships, financial data, e-mail archive—you might well be able to conjure up a reasonable facsimile for Who You Really Are, secrets and all.

But the avatar person constructed by the idol god is not, ultimately, our true self, the one knit together in a mother's womb by a Creator God. Perhaps it is an article of faith, in this strange new world, to confess that God knows us much more fully than any algorithm or digital trail ever could. For most of us, this may well be a sobering reminder. Human beings are so much more screwed up, collectively speaking, than we care to admit. But we are also so much more beloved than we might dare to believe.

"Go," Jesus says to the adulteress, the hypocrite, the hacker. "Go, and sin no more."

CC

A necessary slaughter

(Herod)

I must admit at first it threw me,
competing with a portent. (What fools
would treasure light instead of might?)
Such naïveté: Scholars trekking here
smitten with a star or some convergence
of the cosmos. Yet another fire to put out.

I sent them on their way, their caravan rife
with herbs I could have used myself. Camels
balking and desert horses restless
in the night. Meanwhile that star hummed
like a lute, vibrating on a frequency I coveted
but couldn't always hear. I slammed the door,
closed the shutters. No way would it make
a shadow out of me. My wife said,

"No worries. They'll be back.
Anyway, what child can match your currency,
your death squads? The bricks of that
new temple? And Rome behind you? Get real."

I pulled her close, forgetting which wife
she was (nine? ten?) and glad to have her.
Weeks later, when those wanderers failed
to return, I glanced into my looking glass.
The eyes staring back at me were nothing
but blank gold coins.

Christine Hemp

Katherine Willis Pershey is associate minister at First Congregational Church in Western Springs, Illinois. She is the author of *Any Day a Beautiful Change* (Chalice).

Building relationships across racial lines

A low hum sweeps across the sanctuary, drifting above the bowed heads of huddled prayer groups, beyond the joined hands of black and white worshipers. Whispers carry words such as *harmony*, *unity*, *forgiveness*, and *peace*. Outside, a police car idles as day fades to dusk at Oak Mountain Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Alabama.

The service is the product of a bond established between the mostly white Oak Mountain church and the predominantly black congregation of Urban Hope Community Church.

For pastors Alton Hardy and Bob Flayhart, the goal is to maintain that unity no matter what the circumstances.

Flayhart's 3,000-member Oak Mountain Presbyterian Church is nestled within a zip code where 83.2 percent of the residents are white and 55.7 percent live in houses worth more than \$300,000. Only 3.8 percent of families there live in poverty.

Less than ten minutes away, Hardy's Urban Hope Community Church has a congregation that is more than 90 percent black, and more than 40 percent live below the poverty line.

The two pastors meet every Thursday for breakfast and conversation, and earlier this year they rented a 280-seat theater and brought their congregations together to watch the movie *Selma*. The churches have worked with other local faith-based groups on jobs programs, sustainable business plans, children's arts camps, and prayer walks. Oak Mountain's parishioners have been receptive and generous with resources, offering both employment and pro bono legal assistance to Urban Hope's members.

Meanwhile, Hardy and Flayhart are taking precautions to avoid what some

experts call the "white savior complex," in which well-meaning whites inadvertently try to rescue their partner churches. Hardy sees his church as a facilitator, walking beside Oak Mountain on a journey together.

"We're giving an opportunity for people to build real, authentic relationships with people of color," Hardy said. "It's not like, 'We're going to help you because you're poor.' It's more like, 'What would it look like for African-American Christians and white Christians to build with the common denominator of Christ?'"

For his part, Flayhart is talking about race relations more than he can remember in his 26 years of ministry. In the beginning, the conversations were hard, and there were times, Flayhart admitted, that he had to have the courage to be

vulnerable and say, "I don't know what to say. I'm afraid of saying the wrong thing."

That humility has been an important part of building authentic relationships.

"For those on the outside looking in, they're seeing that the churches can't even come together," said Dion Watts, an Urban Hope member. "That's something that has been a Goliath—a huge stumbling block. If we can come together on this, the message it will send to the rest of the world will be profound."

Watts, who is an accountant, remembers a time in college when he was asked to house-sit in a wealthy white neighborhood. As he settled down on the couch to watch television, he saw police outside the window. When he opened the door, the officer drew his gun and told him to



RACIAL RECONCILIATION: Alton Hardy (left), pastor of the mostly black Urban Hope Community Church in the Birmingham, Alabama, area, talks with church member Dion Watts after a Sunday service. Their congregation has been partnering with a mostly white church "to build real, authentic relationships," Hardy said.

PHOTO BY CARMEN K. SISON / THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

put his hands up and lie face down. In the distance, Watts could see two children pointing and giggling.

These are stories white people need to hear, Hardy said.

Such efforts to open lines of communication are an approach many churches are trying, from the 27-year-old Racial Reconciliation Community Outreach Network in Tucson, Arizona, to Bridge Builders in Austin, Texas.

But there is a danger of creating a “warm and fuzzy” Christianity that feels good but accomplishes little, said Ronald Neal, assistant professor of religion at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. If churches want to address social justice issues, they must first move beyond the fear of a negative backlash and make a long-term commitment, Neal said. It is not social justice unless it addresses the root cause of the problems, he said.

More than a decade ago, Plymouth Congregational Church, a mostly white congregation in Minneapolis, endured a yearlong picket after constructing a 40-unit housing complex for mentally ill and chemically dependent residents. Now its members are working on another controversial project with numerous other churches, building apartments for 72 ex-offenders, most of whom are black.

Incarceration rates are particularly troublesome, said Theresa Voss, a church member and psychologist. When she looks outside her window, she sees what she calls a “tale of two cities.” Sometimes members discussed the segregation within their own church, but though everyone agreed something should be done, no one knew what to do.

Voss said she believes that is about to change. In January, the church appointed a Racial Justice Working Group, and more than 150 members participated in a study of Michelle Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. They hired a consultant to work with the congregation during the next two years, to teach members about white privilege and institutional racism.

The book study was a powerful experience for member Mary Kay Sauter. “I just didn’t realize what was going on with the mass incarceration of black men,”

Sauter said. “I wasn’t paying attention to what it actually meant. . . . It was a whole new awareness of how the world works, reading these books.”

The lessons have become real to her through interactions with African Americans in her community. Though she believed her Christian morals kept her from being a racist, she has come to the uncomfortable truth that while outwardly she spoke love, inwardly she felt fear. That is beginning to change.

“I was taking my granddaughter to school recently, and I watched a black man crossing the street,” Sauter said. “I suddenly thought, ‘I’m not afraid of him. I know nothing about him. I have no reason to be afraid of him.’” —Carmen K. Sisson, *The Christian Science Monitor*

Square in Rome named after Martin Luther

The Vatican has given its backing to naming a central Rome square after Martin Luther.

Luther, a German Catholic priest and theologian before he was excommunicated by Pope Leo X in 1521, denounced the corruption he saw among clergy in Rome. Around the time of his visit to Rome in 1510, Luther reportedly repeated the saying, “If there is a hell, Rome is built over it.”

Luther was not allowed to return to

the Catholic Church in his lifetime, but now the Vatican’s views on him have changed.

A hilltop square in Rome is being named Piazza Martin Lutero in memory of Luther’s achievements. The site chosen is a park on the Oppian Hill that overlooks the Colosseum.

The naming has been six years in the making, following a request made by the Seventh-day Adventists, a Protestant denomination, Italian daily *La Repubblica* reported.

“Unbeknown to the Adventists, the Lutheran Church made a similar proposal to the city of Rome at the same time,” the *Adventist Review* wrote. Both proposals received approval.

The original plan was to inaugurate the square in time for the 500th anniversary of Luther’s historic trip to Rome. City officials were not able to discuss the process behind naming the square or the reason for the holdup.

Only 435,000 of Italy’s 60 million citizens identify as Protestant, according to research published in 2012 by the Center for Studies on New Religions.

The Vatican reacted positively to news of the square’s inauguration. “It’s a decision taken by Rome city hall which is favorable to Catholics in that it’s in line with the path of dialogue started with the ecumenical council,” said Ciro Benedettini, deputy director of the Vatican press office, referring to a gathering of clergy to rule on faith matters.

The Lutheran World Federation web-



REFORMER REMEMBERED: Pope Francis presides over the Via Crucis procession at the Colosseum in Rome on Good Friday, April 3. A square on the hill overlooking the Colosseum now memorializes Martin Luther.

PHOTO COURTESY OF REUTERS/ALESSANDRO BIANCHI

site states, “In 2017, Catholics and Lutherans will jointly look back on the event of the Reformation and reflect on 50 years of official worldwide ecumenical dialogue during which time the communion they share anew has continued to grow.” — Rosie Scammell, Religion News Service

Liberia debates amendment declaring country to be a Christian nation

Christian leaders in Liberia—including the nation’s president, who is a United Methodist—are speaking against a proposal to amend the nation’s constitution to declare Liberia a Christian state.

President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf said the efforts would create “division among the citizens based on religious belief.” She made her comments when she submitted the report of the Constitution Review Committee to the national legislature on August 18, five months after the committee met in Gbarnga and approved the proposal to make Liberia a Christian country.

In an eight-page letter to the Liberian Senate, Sirleaf said the founders of the republic did not put into the Liberian Constitution a declaration of Christianity as the nation’s religion. She added that Article 14 of the constitution correctly separates religion and state and holds specifically and unequivocally that the republic shall establish no religion.

“The constitution has always allowed freedom of religion and worship without seeking to describe or prescribe one religion as the official religion,” she said.

Sirleaf’s letter is expected to be discussed by the national legislature as part of its efforts to hold a referendum on amending the Liberian constitution. Though the national legislature is dominated by Christians, many Christians, including United Methodist bishop John G. Innis, have opposed the proposal to make Liberia a Christian state.

Innis had said that constitutional provisions were not needed to practice the Christian faith and expand the United Methodist Church in Liberia.

“Our Lord Jesus Christ did not force



PHOTO BY MILE DUBOSE / UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE

METHODIST PRESIDENT: *Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, president of Liberia and the first female head of state in Africa—shown here at the 2008 United Methodist General Conference in Fort Worth, Texas—has spoken against declaring Liberia a Christian nation.*

people to follow him, so Christians should not advocate for legislation that will create conflict for our nation,” he said.

The Liberia Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention opposes the constitutional amendment also, writing in an April statement that it goes against the Baptist principles of religious liberty, Baptist News Global reported. Liberian Baptists “have no room for sectarian arrogance within the country’s diverse Christian persuasions and in a progressively more pluralistic world,” the statement said. The Baptist leaders further wrote that they see their stance as rooted in Jesus’ command to treat others as one would want to be treated.

Catholic Christians and Muslim leaders have also expressed opposition to the proposal, according to news reports. Liberia is 12.2 percent Muslim, according to the CIA *World Factbook*.

Earlier, the Constitution Review Committee presented Sirleaf, who is a member of First United Methodist Church in Monrovia, with its final report on all the recommendations from the National Constitution Conference on August 17.

The supporters of the changes to the Liberian constitution said they were simply trying to restore language that was originally in the preamble to the 1847 constitution, which stated that the nation was built on a Christian foundation. They say that language was removed in 1986 when the constitution was amended.

“We are not asking for a statute legislating Christianity,” said Sen. Jewel Howard Taylor. —Julu Swen, United Methodist News Service

Southern Baptist missions to lay off up to 800 people

The Southern Baptist Convention will cut as many as 800 employees from its overseas missions agency to make up for significant shortfalls in revenue, officials announced August 27.

The International Mission Board anticipates an annual budget shortfall of \$21 million this year, following several consecutive years of shortfalls.

The developments are particularly painful for a denomination that was founded as a missionary-sending organization and that prides itself on making Christian converts across the globe.

“Over the past six years, the organization’s expenditures have totaled \$210 million more than has been given to it each year,” the board said in an announcement.

On a conference call with journalists, International Mission Board president David Platt said, “This is not an ideal step, but quite frankly there are no ideal steps at this point.”

Platt told staff about the plan in a town hall meeting at its Richmond, Virginia, headquarters.

The cuts will be achieved through a volunteer retirement plan for employees and restructuring of the agency.

Despite the shortfalls, the mission board intends to send new missionaries to the field—about 300 this year and a similar number in 2016.

Although the board has attempted to address shortfalls by reducing numbers of missionaries through attrition and limited appointments and through property sales, Platt said such methods have not been sufficient.

The board “cannot continue to overspend,” he said in a statement. “For the sake of short-term financial responsibility and long-term organizational stability we must act.”

To balance the budget, the board will have to lay off between 600 and 800 staff and field personnel, he said, adding that that would represent about 15 percent of the mission agency’s employees. Current employees include about 4,800 missionaries and 450 staff.

Sebastian Traeger, the IMB’s executive vice president, said the goal is “to align our cost structure with the amount of money given to us each year,” reported Baptist News Global.

The agency had relied on cash reserves but is “now close to depleting its reserves and must work to restore them to a more responsible level,” according to a “frequently asked questions” document released at the time of the announcement. —Adelle M. Banks, Religion News Service

Israeli settler vigilantes see attacks as route to Jewish theocracy

Clinging to a barren hillside, the Baladim outpost was little more than a solitary trailer, a farming tractor, a makeshift tent for shade, and a flock of goats.

But Israeli security authorities say Baladim and other hilltop outposts served as a base for a new generation of Jewish militants, disaffected youths who allegedly vandalized churches and carried out a deadly arson attack in the near-

by Palestinian village of Duma on July 31. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu denounced the attack, which killed Saad Dawabsha and his 18-month-old son, Ali, as an act of “Jewish terrorism.”

In just a few hours one day in late August, the police and the army cleared the Baladim encampment and two other outposts nearby. It was part of a weeks-long crackdown on so-called “price tag” vigilantes who aim to punish both Palestinians and Israeli security forces for moves against the settlements.

Now authorities are alleging that a hardened core of hilltop youths have adopted a strategy that goes beyond price-tag reprisals. They say this group, believed to have dozens of members, has drawn up a manifesto calling for a “revolt” against Israel’s “wicked” secular government and its replacement with a Jewish theocracy that would bring a religious redemption.

Most Jewish settlers identify as mainstream religious Zionists and consider the hilltop rebels to be a group of teen dropouts who have drifted to the outposts, where they absorb an extremist ideology.

“They are really a group of anarchists who are anti-Zionists, who don’t respect the rabbis and don’t respect the state, and distance themselves from Israeli authority,” said David Ha’ivri, a resident of the Jewish settlement of Tapuach and a former spokesman for the local settler council. “It would be simplistic to call them extreme right wing.”

Experts on Jewish radicalism, however, argue that the hilltop hard-liners likely have plenty of sympathizers and supporters, both in the Jewish settlements and among Israel’s Orthodox Jews.

“This is an outgrowth of religious Zionism,” said Mordechai Inbari, a professor of religion at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. “This is an ideological movement that has mentors, a program, texts; they have many books they publish. It’s not just a matter of crazy kids looking for ways to express their violence. It has leaders, and it has a program for action.”

Both the experts and the mainstream settlers seem to agree that the vigilante attacks and their backers are driven in part by disillusionment with Israel’s government. While critics in the West assail

Netanyahu for a security-first policy that allows little compromise with Palestinians, many far-right Israelis hold the opposite view. They point to too much lenience toward Palestinian militants and a failure to assert Israeli sovereignty in areas controlled by Arabs, such as the holy sites in Jerusalem’s Old City. They also blame the Israeli establishment for razing settlements ten years ago when the military pulled out of the Gaza Strip.

“If you have a state which succumbs all the time to the creation of the Palestinian Authority on land allotted to Israel, if you see homegrown terrorism popping up around you, and the Temple Mount off limits to Jews—if you see all this phenomena of weakness, there are going to be people who are unsatisfied, and are going to be more aggressive,” said Yishai Fleisher, a radio host at the Voice of Israel Internet radio.

What sets the hilltop vigilantes apart from mainstream settlers is that they make an additional argument: Israel’s government has become a hostile entity hopelessly corrupted by Western, non-Jewish political values.

Israel has a history of violent acts motivated by religious conviction among Jews. In the 1980s, a Jewish underground carried out attacks on Palestinian buses, university students, and mayors, and in the mid-1990s, religious opponents of Israel’s peace talks with the Palestinians took the law into their own hands, most notably with the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by Yigal Amir.

“One common denominator is that they [radicals] have some of the same spiritual authorities,” said Dan Ephron, the author of a forthcoming book on the Rabin assassination, *Killing a King*. Though there are no specific calls by rabbis for violence, “it’s enough for rabbis to talk about incendiary issues in the yeshivas.”

An alleged hilltop document released by the Shin Bet lays out a “means of action” and recommends establishing small vigilante cells because “the chances of establishing an organized underground against this foreign rule are so big.” The document discusses the pros and cons of carrying out arson attacks on a mosque, Palestinian homes, and churches—which are considered places of idolatry.

Yesh Din, a human rights group, said Israel has done little to prosecute perpetrators of vigilante violence. Before the arson in Duma, the organization handled 15 cases of house burnings, but zero indictments came out of them.

Honeinu, a legal aid organization which represents hilltop youth arrested by Israeli authorities, said the allegations of Jewish terrorism have been inflated and that the government is rounding up “anyone who looks like a hilltop youth” at places like Baladim and in the region around the nearby settlement of Shiloh.

Despite the crackdown against outposts, observers say there are legal and political impediments to a wider campaign of arrests and indictments in terror cases involving Jewish suspects. Law enforcement officials lack the infrastructure, legal tools, and political backing that exists for counterterrorism against Arab groups, these observers say.

“It will always be more interesting to deal with other security threats, rather than deal with administrative detention and restraining orders for Jewish terrorists,” wrote Yuval Diskin, a former Shin Bet chief, on his Facebook page last month. “With a government based on right wing parties, a political and rabbinic lobby, it doesn’t make political sense either.” —Joshua Mitnick, *The Christian Science Monitor*

Faith-based campaign advocates for open, fair Internet rules

Interfaith leaders have long rallied for racial and economic justice. Now the Faithful Internet campaign is calling on America’s religious communities to fight just as hard for net neutrality.

“None of our social justice work would be possible without net neutrality—the principle that keeps the Internet an open and free space for all of us,” said Valarie Kaur, an American Sikh lawyer and media and strategy fellow at Stanford’s Center for Internet and Society.

Kaur watched that principle come under threat last year when the Federal

Communications Commission considered a proposal that would have allowed Internet service providers to speed up access to those websites willing or able to pay a premium while slowing down the rest.

Millions of Americans filed public comments against the proposal, and in February the FCC adopted Open Internet rules to protect net neutrality. Those came into effect on June 12.

Corporate critics are appealing to Congress and courts to kill the new rules.

Cheryl Leanza, Faithful Internet co-founder, who serves as policy adviser to the United Church of Christ’s Media Justice Ministry, said net neutrality is just as important for everyday worship as it is for interfaith activism. Last year the UCC launched Extravagance, an online community designed to engage UCC members who live far from brick-and-mortar churches.

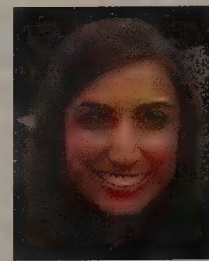
“For a community that would like to worship together online in real time, equal and fair access to high-speed Internet connections is essential,” Leanza said.

Without net neutrality, Leanza and others fear that faith groups’ online sermons and calls for vigils, marches, and protests will take longer to load while the latest seasons of popular TV shows pop up at record speeds in adjacent browser tabs.

The Faithful Internet campaign is attracting supporters from across America’s diverse faith and belief spectrum. Coalition partners include Linda Sarsour, a Muslim activist; Otis Moss III, senior pastor of Chicago’s Trinity United Church of Christ; Sister Simone Campbell, Nuns on the Bus organizer; and Greg Epstein, Harvard University humanist chaplain.

Epstein said the Faithful Internet campaign resonates particularly well with digital natives.

“With the spread of the open Internet, people are growing up virtually in an area of extraordinary diversity, and it’s making them better-informed, caring and compassionate citizens of the world,” he said. “It would be the greatest tragedy if we



Valarie Kaur

allowed the greatest tool in the history of human knowledge to be handed over to some sort of elite.”

Net neutrality also allows encounters among people of different faiths, according to supporters.

“We need conversations in cyberspace that dismantle our silos,” said Jacqueline Lewis, senior minister of Middle Collegiate Church in New York City. “I converse with a young Muslim lawyer who lives in Pakistan. Seeing the world through his eyes changes my point of view.”

Speaking on the Faithful Internet webinar launch last November, Kaur recalled how important a free and open Internet was to her faith community and interfaith allies in 2012 when a gunman fatally shot six people and wounded four more at a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin.

“The only way we kept that story alive was through the Internet,” Kaur said. “Sikh advocates and our allies . . . posted op-

eds, used social media, and launched petitions online that finally persuaded President Obama one year later to make a historic policy change to track hate crimes against Sikhs, Hindus, and other religious minorities. For a small, marginalized faith community like my own, none of this would have been possible without the solidarity that we all built together online.”

This summer, Faithful Internet enlisted more than 300 faith leaders and organizations to distribute a new promotional video emphasizing the ongoing need for net neutrality advocacy in the face of corporate calls to scrap the FCC’s Open Internet rules.

The video highlights how activists have used the Internet to

build social movements and promote racial equality and justice after fatal shootings in Ferguson, Missouri, and Charleston, South Carolina.

In one scene, Trinity UCC pastor Moss writes, “The Internet is increasingly critical to our sharing Christ’s message, and empowering people to create a just, loving society.” —Brian Pellot, Religion News Service



Cheryl Leanza



Otis Moss III

People

AP PHOTO / JACQUELYN MARTIN, FILE



■ **Amelia Boynton Robinson**, one of the organizers of the first march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, died August 26 in Montgomery. She was 104.

Selma became a flashpoint in the civil rights movement in large part because of Boynton Robinson's efforts to bring Martin Luther King Jr. to the city and make it a battleground in the fight to grant black people the right to vote.

She "had met Dr. King in 1954 and been involved with the work of his Southern Christian Leadership Conference ever since, had long opened her house in Selma as a meeting ground for civil rights leaders," the *New York Times* obituary reported.

During the march on March 7, 1965, known as "Bloody Sunday," state troopers teargassed, clubbed, and whipped the 600 nonviolent protesters when they attempted to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Boynton Robinson, who was near the front of the march, was knocked unconscious, and her image—appearing in newspapers nationwide—helped to galvanize support for civil rights.

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the federal Voting Rights Act into law. Boynton Robinson attended the ceremony at the White House as a guest of honor.

"I wasn't looking for notoriety," she told the *New York Post* last year. "But if that's what it took, I didn't care how many licks I got. It just made me even more determined to fight for our cause."

As part of the 50th anniversary commemoration, Boynton Robinson held hands with President Obama as they

reenacted the march across the bridge (pictured left).

"She was as strong, as hopeful, and as indomitable of spirit—as quintessentially American—as I'm sure she was that day 50 years ago," President Obama said in a statement. "To honor the legacy of an American hero like Amelia Boynton requires only that we follow her example—that all of us fight to protect everyone's right to vote."

Boynton Robinson made civil rights activism a cornerstone of her life: as a girl she handed out leaflets advocating for the right for women to vote, in the 1930s and '40s she pushed for registering black voters, and in 1964 she became the first black woman to run for office in Alabama. In 1991, she published a memoir, *Bridge Across Jordan*.

"She was a loving person, very supportive—but civil rights was her life," Bruce Boynton told the Associated Press about his mother.

Rep. John Lewis of Georgia, another civil rights leader, called Boynton Robinson a persistent voice for civil rights. "I am so glad she lived to see . . . the amazing transformation our work gave rise to in America," Lewis said. —Kevin Truong, *The Christian Science Monitor*

■ **Jimmy Carter**, 90, returned to his hometown of Plains, Georgia, after a recent diagnosis that cancer had spread to his brain.

His return sparked a pilgrimage of nearly 1,000 people to Carter's regular Sunday school class at Maranatha Baptist Church. To accommodate the crowds, the former president taught a second class at a local school gymnasium.

"You have heard it was said that you will love your neighbor and hate your enemy, but I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you," Carter said. "How would the world be changed if everyone—Syrians, Iranians, Israelis, Palestinians . . . Republicans and Democrats—adopted Christ's definition of love?"

Residents of the town of 700 say Carter "sets the tone" and "keeps our mind open." Carter recently decided

that, when the time comes, he will be laid to rest in Plains, not at the Carter Center, his "mini United Nations" in Atlanta.

"The importance of Plains to Carter is that he comes back after the presidency, regroups," said Randall Balmer, author of *Redeemer: The Life of Jimmy Carter*, "and decides, as a result of being awake in the middle of the night, to start the Carter Center. But earlier, in 1966, after losing his first try for governor in Georgia, he also goes back to Plains and has a spiritual renewal."

For some, Carter's journey defines the white southern evolution on race, informed by both his father's adherence to Jim Crow social standards and his mother's rejection of them. While largely on the sidelines of the civil rights movement, Carter built his governorship and presidential run on social justice, including the rights of black people and Hispanic farmworkers. And Carter's human rights and health-care work across the globe has been largely fueled by the changes he witnessed as the South reckoned with institutional racism.

"Carter saw in the South what brave people standing up speaking the truth can accomplish," said Bob Strong, a Washington and Lee University political scientist. —Patrik Jonsson, *The Christian Science Monitor*

■ **John C. Dorhauer** began work in Cleveland on September 1 as the United Church of Christ's general minister and president.

Dorhauer, who has served as conference minister of the UCC Southwest Conference and as a pastor in rural Missouri, is author of *Beyond Resistance: The Institutional Church Meets the Postmodern World*. He has a doctor of ministry degree from United Theological Seminary, where he studied white privilege and its effects on the church.

His plans include rebuilding relationships between local churches and the national church and strengthening partnerships with other faith groups and organizations, according to the UCC News.



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LIVING BY The Word

October 4, 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Psalm 8

CHRISTIANS HAVE long tried to find convincing answers to the questions raised by the persistence of evil in the world. We inherited the questions—and some answers—in the form of writings such as Job. We have come up with adversaries to blame, constructing them from biblical passages such as the Garden of Eden in Genesis, the fallen “Day Star, son of Dawn,” in Isaiah 14, and the wilderness tempter in the synoptic Gospels. We have even gone so far as to claim that any evil we perceive is nothing more than a manifestation of God’s justice toward us, unworthy as we are (Calvin, *Institutes* 3.23.4–7).

At the same time, human beings have claimed special status and power for themselves in the framework of God’s creation. The voice of the psalmist is not alone in claiming that humans are only “a little lower than God, and crowned . . . with glory and honor,” or in affirming that God has “given them dominion over the works of [God’s] hands” and has “put all things under their feet.”

Can it be any wonder, then, that our faith leaves a great deal of room for people to disagree about the extent of our power in creation? Lacking any final and definitive statement about our place in the order of things, even well-intentioned Christians have a tendency to take up the mantle of power when it suits us and then shrug it off when it becomes uncomfortable. We presume the right to use natural resources for human profit, for example, yet remain largely silent when it comes to doing something about climate change.

A strong, theologically grounded understanding of the nature of our power in the world might actually help us be more active when it comes to the problems we see all around us—especially if this understanding is connected to the brokenness of creation and framed in relationship with God’s sovereignty.

The question of our place and our power in the context of God’s creation is clearly not a simple one to address. But recent explorations of the problems we face—everything from the social problems of violence and division, to the overwhelming complexity of global financial systems, to the ever-expanding frontiers of modern health care—suggest that our true status probably lies somewhere between the extremes. We are neither pawns in a celestial struggle nor godlike possessors of the wealth of the universe.

The field of epigenetics is one area that helps illuminate how the power dynamics that distinguish between creator and

creation are not so straightforward. Where once we believed that God created us with a certain predetermined nature, epigenetics points out that environmental factors can affect the way our individual cells read genes, altering how they are expressed—and that these changes can even be transferred across generations. So we are not beings with an independent physical expression that stands apart from or above our environment. Changes in climate and diet, exposure to external factors like pollutants—these things can affect our expression and experience of who we are.

“Epigenetics is proving we have responsibility for the integrity of our genome,” writes biologist Randy Jirtle. “Before, genes predetermined outcomes. Now everything we do—everything we eat or smoke—can affect our gene expression and that of future generations. Epigenetics introduces the concept of free will into our idea of genetics.”

It also helps us see that we human beings are much more interconnected with the rest of creation than we previously believed. If that’s the case, then our care for the environment is not just about managing a network of resources that exist for our benefit. It’s really about embracing our place in the broad picture of God’s creation, in a way that creates peace and wholeness for all. The image of God that we claim lives in us is integrally linked to all other things—which in turn have an impact on that divine image and how it shines forth.

New revelations from the world of science give us urgent reason to update our religious understandings of creation and our place in it. “We must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God’s image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures,” writes Pope Francis in his recent encyclical on the environment. “The biblical texts are to be read in their context,” he continues,

with an appropriate hermeneutic, recognizing that they tell us to “till and keep” the garden of the world (cf. Gen 2:15). “Tilling” refers to cultivating, ploughing or working, while “keeping” means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving. This implies a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature. Each community can take from the bounty of the earth whatever it needs for subsistence, but it also has the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations . . . Human beings too are creatures of this world, enjoying a right to life and happiness, and endowed with unique dignity. So we cannot fail to consider the effects on people’s lives of environmental deterioration, current models of development and the throwaway culture.

Reflections on the lectionary

October 11, 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Psalm 72:1-13

THIS SUMMER I had the great pleasure of traveling to Korea, where most of my extended family and all but a few of my wife's relatives live. The main purpose of our trip was to attend my wife's youngest sister's wedding, but we were also able to connect with many friends and family members we hadn't seen in a long time. The wedding was a wonderful celebration that, culturally speaking, felt as if it could have been taking place in Chicago.

There was, however, another family gathering—one more somber and steeped in Korean tradition. It opened me up to a deep sense of connection with my family and my ancestral culture. On one of our first evenings there, my family attended a ceremony memorializing the death of my great-grandfather. The ceremony, called *jesa*, occurs on the anniversary of an ancestor's death. Following traditional guidelines, family members prepare a meal to “serve” to the ancestor. Incense is lit, drinks are offered, and respect is shown through traditional greetings.

There are conflicting views on the spiritual significance of this ceremony. It was condemned as idol worship by Protestant missionaries, so modern Korean Protestants generally shun the practice. I believe that I can participate without any compromise to my own faith. But that theological controversy aside, for me the important thing about these gatherings is that they are among the few occasions when all the generations gather around common tables. We gather to eat—mountains of food are prepared—and to hear old, hard stories about those who have gone before us.

My parents left Korea when I was ten months old, so there are a lot of family stories that I don't know. As I gathered with my father's family to observe *jesa*, I heard for the first time the story of my great-grandfather's death. When the Korean War began in 1950, he sent the rest of the family south to flee the advancing North Korean forces. He stayed, because the land he farmed was all he had—and besides, what would they do to an old, humble farmer?

It turns out my great-grandfather was also on the municipal registry as a member of the local constabulary. He was executed by the occupying forces.

My uncle told me this story so that I could help keep our ancestor alive in memory, so that I could know whence I had come, so that I might try to understand that my present life is built on the many sacrifices of others I will never know. And perhaps so that I might gain the resolve necessary to do the same for others who come after me.

As a second-generation Korean American, it is often hard to identify the stories from my personal and ancestral past that can serve as reservoirs of understanding for the life I am living now. When it comes to my faith, it doesn't seem enough that my predominantly white church family taught me stories about God's faithfulness to the Israelites, or even to the Christians of the Reformation or the civil rights movement. What if I had more personal stories in which I could recognize God? “In you our ancestors trusted,” I could proclaim from those stories. “They trusted, and you delivered them.”

This is not just a problem for immigrants and minorities. I work with young adults at a large, progressive, downtown Chicago church. One of the biggest reasons our outreach to young adults works, I think, is that the group and the congregation allow these emerging—often struggling—adults to bring their genuine selves into a faith community. They don't have to check anything at the door. Not their honest thoughts or questions; not their lifestyles, their wants, desires, and ambitions; not even their questionable decisions or their persistent problems.

When it comes to dealing with their persistent problems—particularly when it comes to finding their place and identifying their calling—I think today's young adults increasingly experience the same poverty of stories that I have encountered. Marshall and Sara Duke, both psychologists, have studied the relationship between young people's knowledge of family stories and their resilience. They found that knowing even simple things about your own family can improve your chances of successfully facing life's challenges, especially disappointments and trauma.

Marshall Duke and another colleague developed a “Do You Know?” scale based on a series of questions: Do you know where your grandparents grew up? Do you know where your mom and dad went to high school? Do you know where your parents met? Do you know an illness or something really terrible that happened in your family? Do you know the story of your birth? According to Bruce Feiler, who wrote about this research in a 2013 *New York Times* article, “The ‘Do You Know?’ scale turned out to be the best single predictor of children's emotional health and happiness.”

The psalmist cried out to God in a time of distress. Knowing this helps us understand that lifting our own difficulties to God is a faithful thing to do. Yet maybe the words of the psalm are not enough. Perhaps we need to write our own words, know our own stories, and find God's saving power there as well.

The author is Hardy Kim, associate pastor of Fourth Presbyterian Church in Chicago.



CHURCHES THRIVE AMONG THE LISU PEOPLE

China's gospel valley

by Lian Xi

PASTOR JESSE'S mud-plastered Mitsubishi SUV jolted wildly along the newly dug dirt road that zigzagged up the mountainside toward the construction site of the new church. We stopped to let a pedestrian squeeze by, a middle-aged Lisu woman with a pink, checkered headscarf and a giant bamboo back basket which was strapped to her forehead. The Lisu are one of the 56 ethnic minorities of China and the predominant tribespeople in Gongshan, which nestles on the slope of the Gaoligongshan mountain range. Only 30 miles to the north, these mountain peaks reach more than 16,000 feet. Beyond that is Tibet.

It was a sun-drenched Saturday morning in December 2014. I had arrived the night before on my first visit to the area after reading Chinese media reports of the explosive growth of Christianity among the Lisu people in the "Gospel Valley," as the Upper Salween River Valley is known. The church under construction is called Zion. It replaces a smaller one built in 1998 with members' shovels, picks, baskets, and bare hands.

"Brothers and sisters brought their own bedrolls and woks and camped over there during construction of the first church," Pastor Jesse said, gesturing toward the terraced fields up the slope. "Almost all the construction material was carried up here in bamboo baskets."

That included stone quarried from the mountainside nearby. The church had no money, so the people did everything themselves. A decade and a half later, the congregation had outgrown the space, so the original building was dismantled to

make way for the new. This time the people have a cement mixer, a miniature crane mounted on the highest floor, and a host of buckets.

The steel-and-concrete frame was more than half complete. On the east side, overlooking the deep gorge of the Salween River, the building rises seven stories high, its bottom floor a reinforced version of the stilts that still support older wooden houses perched precariously on the mountainside. The new sanctuary will hold up to 700 worshipers; other rooms will house several dozen seasonal seminary students.

Since 2000, theological classes have been held at Zion for the training of *mizipa* (deacons), *mapa* (evangelists), and Sunday school teachers—men and women in their thirties and forties who come from other towns and villages. Many have to cross the mountains on foot to get here. The deacon training takes two years—one semester a year, from late spring to fall. After that the mountain passes disappear under heavy snows.

"There." Pastor Jesse pointed toward a nondescript house a hundred yards away. "That's where Mr. Morse had his straw hut and ran his Bible training classes." Like other Lisu Christians, Jesse goes by a biblical first name.

He was referring to Russell Morse, the Church of Christ-turned-independent missionary whose work among

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the Lisu led to thousands of conversions in the 1930s and '40s. Jesse's grandfather A-ci had attended Morse's Bible classes.

The sparsely populated Upper Salween Valley may seem an unlikely place for a Christian community to thrive. Canadian missionary Isobel Kuhn of the China Inland Mission likened its topography to a "monster dump heap of all the excess rock and debris" of China, through which "the Salween River has tried to escape, boiling and thrashing its way with impotent fury at the strength of the cool resisting granite."

Across the river from Gongshan are the Biluo Snow Mountains, called "the mountains of icy waves" by 13th-century Mongol conquerors. To American airmen flying DC-3s and Curtiss C-46s from India to West China during World War II, they were known as the "Big Hump." This was the most dangerous terrain for the fliers. "Ice can build up so rapidly on the wings that within five minutes a plane loses all flying capacity and drops like a rock into the jungle," wrote wartime correspondent Theodore White.

I first met Jesse on Friday, when I arrived in the Upper Salween Valley. A mutual friend had put me in touch with him. He had a packed schedule over the weekend, with stops at various places, but was willing to take me along.

Jesse, who is in his midforties, is from a Lisu clan called Bees, a name that both denotes their traditional occupation as honey gatherers and hints at the focus of the clan's former totem worship, as do other clan names such as Tigers, Bears, and even Buckwheat and Tea. His grandfather A-ci had hailed from a village nearby.

A hot-tempered man, A-ci had always defied the outside powers that periodically descended on his mountain hamlet—be they Tibetan bandits or Han Chinese officials sent by the Nationalist government. The Bible that Russell Morse taught spoke to his place and time: the hated Chinese officials were the equivalent of scribes and Pharisees. He would have nothing to do with them. When he was told to help carry their sedan chairs to the next village, he flatly refused. There is a fierce independence running in the Lisu blood.

During a communist witch hunt for "counterrevolutionaries" in the late 1950s, all Lisu pastors were arrested. Christians in A-ci's village were "struggled against" at denunciation meetings. But nobody came after A-ci. "Everybody knew he was a big and impetuous man," Jesse said.

"He announced that if they dared to come to drag him out to the struggle meetings, he would cut down a few with his long sword and run over to Burma that very night," Jesse added with a laugh.

A-ci not only fended off the attack on his faith; he also managed to hide Lisu Bibles, tracts, and hymnals in a cave. Those treasures were dug out after 1979, when the Communist Party relaxed its religious policies.

The Bibles and hymnals printed in the Lisu language held an uncommon place in the hearts of the tribespeople. Like most minority peoples of Yunnan province, the Lisu did not have a written language. They recalled a time when the Mother-God gave words to their forefather, who found a piece of deerskin and wrote them down. Then he laid the deerskin

out in the sun to dry. But a wild dog came and ate up the piece of deerskin. And that was why the Lisu had no books.

The storied loss of written language weighed heavily on the Lisu, leaving them with an acute sense of deprivation. Yet the Lisu legends foretold the coming of a fair-skinned Lisu king who would bring books in the Lisu language.

In 1908, James O. Fraser of the China Inland Mission arrived to pioneer evangelistic work in western Yunnan. With the help of a Burmese Karen evangelist, Fraser developed a simple script based on the English alphabet to represent Lisu sounds. It became known as the Fraser script and was used to translate the Bible, starting with Mark's Gospel.

For the Lisu tribespeople from the mountains, Fraser was the fair-skinned Lisu king who brought the books. Years later Kuhn lamented that Fraser's "white-man appearance so monopolized interest that no one remembers his message."

Fraser went on to oversee all the work of the CIM in Yunnan. He developed a strategy of training Lisu *mapa* and *mizipa* to carry the gospel into villages and to start new, self-supporting congregations. CIM missionaries also collaborated with the Lisu in Bible translation. In 1938, the year Fraser died, the first complete Lisu New Testament was printed in Shanghai.

Fugong is the most Christian region in all of China.

The arrival of the Lisu Bible helped revitalize a languishing and battered Lisu ethnic identity. Without a common written language and condemned for centuries to a life of migratory slash-and-burn agriculture, the scattered Lisu tribes in Western Yunnan had developed local dialects that were at times mutually incomprehensible. Assimilation in lifestyle and language seemed inevitable as new waves of Han Chinese migrated into western Yunnan. Han domination and rapacious tax collection by headmen from other dominant ethnic groups further demoralized the Lisu tribespeople. Then came the Fraser script and the Lisu Bible, which breathed new life and cohesiveness into this migratory community.

At noon, Jessie and I left the construction site of the future Zion Church to deliver 1,000 Lisu hats to a church in a nearby village. The freshly completed church, painted a bright sunflower color, would be dedicated in two weeks and the hats would be souvenirs.

We were on the road again after the delivery. Jesse's final destination that day was a mountain church in the village of Latudi in Fugong County 70 miles down the Salween River. We drove past a maroon church overlooking the river. Hundreds of triangle banners of red, pink, blue, green, and yellow fluttered in the wind on polyester strings that radiated from the rooftop to the ground on all sides.

"That church opened two weeks ago," Jesse said.

Half an hour later we saw another small, new church on the roadside. "This one was built six months back."



Invariably these churches are among the largest and brightest-colored buildings in a hamlet. Above them, the forested mountains rise at breathtaking angles, at times almost perpendicular, to form deep ravines. It was into these ravines that many of the hundreds of ill-fated American planes on the Hump flight plunged between 1942 and 1945.

In 1943, Russell Morse's sons, Eugene and Robert, organized a network of search and rescue teams made up of Lisu Christian tribesmen to locate and help downed airmen or to identify the bodies and give them a Christian burial. On March 29, 1944, four airmen were rescued. The Americans had landed in trees and their parachute lines were entangled in the branches. The Lisu team that found them cut the lines and escorted the airmen to the Morses' home.

"That was a famine year," wrote Gertrude Morse, Russell's wife, "but our [Lisu] Christian brethren were very generous in sharing their meager supply of food with us and the fliers."

In return for the rescue, the U.S. Army Air Force arranged for an airdrop: a military transport plane dropped 43 parachute packs of Lisu Bible primers and other supplies on a mountain-side in Gongshan, where Gertrude Morse had made a big white cross with her bedsheets. For months, Lisu Christians glowed in amazement as they told of the "flying house" that had dropped God's word from the sky.

There were no roads those days in the Upper Salween Valley—only mountain footpaths over a dizzying drop down the bank. Today, the asphalt two-lane highway is clogged with the cars of Han Chinese tourists, local tractors carrying cement and steel bars, and trucks hauling hardwood timber harvested in Myanmar. The outside world has broken into this canyon.

In one village, a barefooted man wearing a greasy olive-green army uniform with no epaulets staggered down the center of the road, his ankles and feet the color of the mountain's red dirt. He clutched a bottle of liquor in his left hand and raised his right hand to give our vehicle a sloppy salute.

Alcoholism was rampant among the Lisu when the missionaries first arrived, and it still plagues a sizable portion of the non-Christian population. It is estimated that in the early 20th century, more than 12 percent of the area's harvested grain was used for liquor. Many villages had to endure food shortages for four months out of each year.

As Christianity spread in the valley, a modified Lisu Ten Commandments banned drinking, gambling, and opium smoking along with brawling and traditional dancing and singing. "Satan and sin have given them a set of licentious yodel songs," protested Kuhn. "On the surface it is nature talk, as of birds, or the meetings of streams, but each is a metaphor so vile that no Christian Lisu will translate it for you." Today the yodeling is gone, much to the exasperation of anthropologists.

It was dark when we finally arrived at Latudi. In the stillness of the night, the choir was practicing for the worship the next day. Peals of laughter punctuated the sound of women singing bubbly Lisu hymns. Seven or eight middle-aged and older men, deacons and elders of the church, welcomed us to a hearty supper of rice, home-raised silkie chicken, and mustard greens. After dinner they beckoned us to sit around the fire—a heavy metal basin loaded with chunks of charcoal. The tanned faces of the men glowed in the firelight as they told stories and traded jokes. I could not see in those faces any trace of the horrendous suffering borne by the entire Lisu tribe half a century ago—a wave of violent persecution that swept through the valley. Latudi was near its epicenter.

First came sporadic instances of threats and violence. "One of our beloved Lisu preachers was punished by having his ears, nose, and tongue cut off," reported Gertrude Morse, whose family moved into Burma after 1949 to continue their work among the Lisu there.

Then came the counterrevolutionary case of 1958. In May, Cha Shumin, a Lisu, led a guerrilla force of some 400 in an incursion into the Upper Salween Valley from Burma. They killed a dozen local Communist Party officials and activists. As the intruders fled back into Burma, Cha left behind a briefcase

containing a pair of binoculars and a blueprint for a “Lisu Kingdom,” which included a list of proposed top court officials. Most were prominent Lisu Christians who had been chosen to serve in local government posts because of the superior education they had received in church-run schools.

What followed the attack was a massive police operation in the Nuijiang (the Chinese name for Salween) Lisu Autonomous Prefecture to hunt down “counterrevolutionaries” who were plotting to establish the fictitious Lisu Kingdom. The prefectural party secretary set a quota of several thousand counterrevolutionaries for every county. More than 10,000 Lisu were arrested on suspicion of harboring pro-American sentiments. Most of them were Christian, and 5,000 of them were killed or perished in labor camps.

Jails in the Upper Salween Valley quickly filled up, and the overflow was directed to neighboring counties. Those arrested in Fugong were marched over the icy Biluo Snow Mountains to be imprisoned in Lanping County. Even women still nursing their babies were dragged away, barefooted. One public security officer later recalled: “A group of Lisu were under escort . . . They either had their hands bound or handcuffed and some were even in fetters. . . . The straggling line stretched out several kilometers,” and the valley reverberated with “the intermittent clanking of the chains.”

The rebirth of the church began in the 1980s, after the discovery of Lisu Bibles.

These events prompted an estimated 30,000 to flee to Burma. In all, some 40,000 Lisu migrated to northern Burma between 1949 and 1966 (the year when the Cultural Revolution broke out), including 10,000 Christians. Churches were razed or closed, and the remaining Christians were driven underground.

“In one village, some Lisu Christians recovered a wooden post that had supported the church before it was torn down,” said Bobby Morse, the grandson of Russell Morse and a missionary in Chiang Mai, Thailand. “And they carved the Lisu New Testament on the post.”

The rebirth of the Lisu church in the Upper Salween began in the early 1980s with the reappearance of the Lisu Bibles. The earlier generation of Lisu pastors was gone, so laypeople like A-ci began leading worship meetings in their homes. In 1983, Jesse became a Christian.

“Four years later, I dedicated myself to God,” Jesse said.

He soon started baptizing people in the bone-chilling water of the Salween River near Gongshan. They came in droves. And the baptisms have not stopped.

Development in Fugong is even faster-paced. It has become the most Christian region in all of China, with church members accounting for about 70 percent of Fugong’s roughly 90,000 residents. Their exceptionally low crime rate also makes the county an oasis in this heroin-infested province bordering the infamous

Golden Triangle, a major opium-producing area. A few months earlier, in the picturesque town of Old Dali, I had followed an arrow pointing toward a Muslim restaurant and found, scrawled on a plastered white wall, the words “guns, sedatives, wireless tapping” next to a cell phone number. In the Gospel Valley, such thrills give way to the more mundane rhythm of corn harvests and Sunday worship. Each of the 360 or so villages in Fugong now has at least one church.

On Sunday Jessie led a thanksgiving worship to celebrate the addition of a reception hall to the church in Latudi. Worship drew about 400 people. They came in single file down the narrow dirt path, past terraced fields covered with canola flowers in bloom, past stone and concrete tombs at the end of the fields—Christian tombs, each with a faded red cross that had been painted on the front.

A 15-member female choir sang and swayed to the accompaniment of an electric guitar and drums played by two spirited boys. The women wore their Lisu Sunday best: black- and wine-colored velvet vests with gold borders, over white shirts and pleated lavender skirts. The congregation spilled out into the courtyard; the people responded to Jesse’s sermon by singing hymns from the Lisu hymnal.

Later in the service, groups of ruddy-faced girls ascended the dais behind the lectern, dancing and singing gospel songs to the snickers of teenage boys and young men in the congregation—the closest they now get to yodeling.

On our way down the dirt mountain road after the worship, we stopped to give a ride to three girls, age ten to 12, who were on their way to the public boarding school at the foot of the mountain.

“Are your textbooks in Lisu?” I asked.

“No, they are in Chinese,” the ten-year-old told me. And so are the cartoons they watch on television and the pop songs that blast from storefront boom boxes to attract customers.

Across the river from the school, Fugong is cluttered with shops and gray office, hotel, and apartment buildings. Some euphemistically named “Thai-style massage” salons run by Han Chinese have opened up as shopkeepers, tourists, and traders in Burmese lumber and jade descend into the valley from coastal and inland China.

I wondered what will happen to the Lisu people. Will they stay in the Salween Valley or join the 250 million rural residents whom the government will move into China’s cities and towns over the next dozen years? Will their children lose their Lisu language when they grow up? If the history of the last several hundred years offers any clue, the Lisu people will be able to keep their way of life and an identity that is rooted in the Lisu language and now the Lisu Bible as well. Although the government introduced a “scientific” romanization system in the 1950s, today government publications have reverted back to the Fraser script. The Lisu Bible has endured.

And as the churches read from the Lisu Bible, they continue to attract new members and build new worship spaces. When Jesse dropped me off at a bus stop that afternoon, he offered me his blessings. He was heading back to Gongshan for an evening prayer meeting at Zion.

Author Yossi Klein Halevi

Israel's dreams and nightmares

AN ISRAELI JOURNALIST, born in Brooklyn, Yossi Klein Halevi is senior fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute, a research and educational center in Jerusalem. He is co-director, with Abdullah Antepli of Duke University, of the institute's Muslim Leadership Initiative. He is the author of *At the Entrance to the Garden of Eden: A Jew's Search for God with Christians and Muslims in the Holy Land* (2001). His book *Like Dreamers: The Story of the Israeli Paratroopers Who Reunited Jerusalem and Divided a Nation* was named the 2013 Jewish Book of the Year by the Jewish Book Council.

In *Like Dreamers* you display the sharp divide that emerged in Israel after 1967 between messianic religious believers and secularists, and between the religiously motivated settlement movement and the peace movement, as well as various religious and political positions in between. In tracking individual histories over 50 years, did you find anything that surprised you or made you think differently about Israel?

I worked on *Like Dreamers* for 11 years, and one of the reasons it took so long was that I only gradually understood what it was about. It began as an account of the left-right divide that opened as a result of the Six-Day War, and I used the paratroopers who had fought in the battle for Jerusalem as the device to tell that story. But then I realized that there was a deeper story: the shift from the Israel that was represented by the socialist communal kibbutz movement to the Israel that was represented by the West Bank settlement movement.

What connects the kibbutz and the settlements was that both were expressions—in radically different ways—of the utopian or messianic impulse. The socialist kibbutzniks believed that Israel would be the laboratory for democratic communism. The settlers believed that the return home of the Jews would be the trigger for the messianic era.

So the book presents a way of understanding Israel's story through the fate of these vast dreams of world redemption. I realized that the longing for redemption was in some way at the heart of the Israeli story. Seen that way, the struggle between left and right in Israel is a struggle between rival visions of redemption. Israel's story is, in part, the story of what happened to those vast dreams when they encountered reality.

One divide that emerged after 1967 is between those who see Israel's military victory in the Six-Day War as a divine act, or at least one with great religious meaning, and those who view it more pragmatically as a military victory that presented both



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possibilities and dangers. You write with sympathy for both points of views. As an Israeli, how do you negotiate that issue?

The Six-Day War was a moment of profound healing for the Jewish people. Many of us feared that another holocaust was about to happen, this time in Israel. Instead we won the greatest military victory in Jewish history. Many Jews responded by thinking: if it was fair to blame God for his silence during the Holocaust, it was only fair to acknowledge his miraculous deliverance now. My father, a Holocaust survivor, put it this way: Now I can forgive God. Many young secular Jews began observing Judaism.

But even a miracle doesn't absolve us of assessing its consequences. The first consequence of the Six-Day War was that the destruction of Israel was averted. The second consequence was that Israel became an occupier of another people. No one planned it, no one wanted that to happen. But it did. And so at the end of the day I find myself in the camp of the pragmatists who believe in dividing this land between Israelis and Palestinians.

Peace plans call for the removal of at least some major Jewish settlements in the occupied territory to allow for the creation of a Palestinian state. Do you think Israel has the political will to do it?

As an Israeli who believes in partitioning this land, I accept the necessity of evacuating settlements. But I will experience the forced evacuation of my fellow Israelis from their homes—many of whom were born into those homes—as a historic trauma, and the separation from places like Hebron as a kind of amputation. I love Tel Aviv, but by the measure of Jewish history and the Middle East, it's a baby city, barely a century old. Hebron holds 4,000 years of Jewish history.

A majority of Israelis have consistently told pollsters that they're ready for a two-state solution. The only consideration for Israeli pragmatists is that the Palestinian state be a peaceful neighbor and genuinely recognize the Jewish people's right to a sovereign state in the Middle East. There are 21 Arab states and 56 Muslim states; the existence of one Jewish major-

ity state in this world is an act of justice. Not, of course, at the expense of another people.

If the Palestinian leadership convinced us that a land-for-peace deal would really result in peace, we would find the will to dismantle settlements.

What would it take to persuade Israelis to sign on to such a deal—and what would persuade you? What are the main barriers to that happening?

For me, the main barrier is the deeply held belief of Palestinians that all of historical justice is on their side, and that the Jews are strangers who have invented a historical connection with the land of Israel/Palestine.

I follow the Palestinian media, and that's the message that one generation after another of Palestinians is raised on. And this message comes not only from the Islamist media but also from the Palestinian Authority: the Jews are liars and thieves who aren't even a real people. We've invented our history. There was no ancient Jewish presence in the land of Israel, no temple on the Temple Mount, no Holocaust. My entire being is a lie.

This deeply rooted denial of Jewish legitimacy is rife not only in Palestinian society but throughout the Middle East. It's astonishing to me that the international community gives this Jew-hatred a pass, as though it had no impact on peace.

The Arab world generally (and some Western Christians too) need to come to terms with the fact that the Jews are a people with a religious identity, that there is no Judaism without the Jewish people, and that Judaism works a little differently than the other monotheistic faiths by grounding its being in a specific people attached to a specific land.

When I see at least the beginning of a Palestinian attempt to come to terms with our right to define ourselves as a people, I'll begin to force myself to lower my guard and take a chance.

You are well acquainted with the constraints imposed on Palestinians—the checkpoints and the limits on travel, work, and political participation. What would you as an Israeli say to the ordinary Palestinian who simply seeks to be a citizen of his own “normal” country?

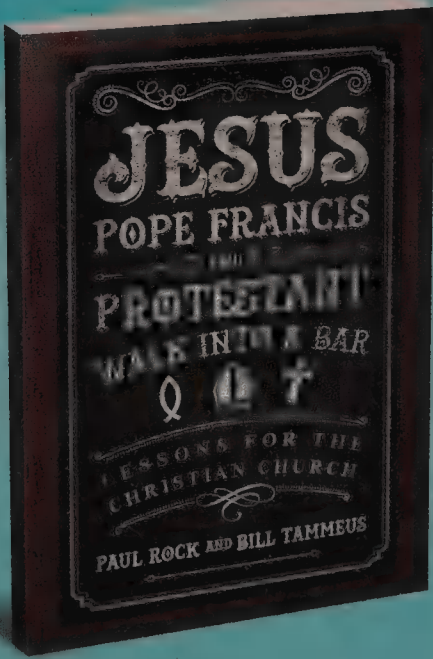
First: I'm sorry. I'm sorry that my side didn't have the wisdom to avoid the temptation of reclaiming land we regard as part of our historical patrimony but which we should have left alone. I'm sorry that you've lived your life under occupation. I'm sorry for all the wasted energies that have gone into this conflict. I'm sorry for the shattering of your people. My people didn't return home with

the intent of displacing another people, but that is what happened as a result of the conflict between us. I will support whatever we need to do to try to make this right—short of creating a new injustice that would threaten my people's safety, our homecoming.

“I desperately want to end this occupation, which is destroying both sides.”

But I also need to say this: At every crucial moment when there was a credible offer on the table, the mainstream of the Zionist movement and of Israeli society said yes to territorial compromise, while the leadership of the Palestinian national movement said no or else said nothing.

I desperately want to end this occupation, which is destroying each side in different ways. But I need some assurance from Palestinian leaders that we're not being tricked, that the day after I withdraw from the West Bank, missiles won't start falling on Tel Aviv, that if we redivide Jerusalem, Hamas won't take over. The region around us is on fire; I can't afford to risk such chaos overtaking my society.



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—PHYLLIS TICKLE, author of *The Great Emergence*

In regard to the prospect of an Iran armed with nuclear weapons, it seems there are two options: a military strike, probably by Israel, that destroys Iran's nuclear facilities or a negotiated deal that appeals to Iran's economic self-interest. Both routes present enormous short-term and long-term risks. President Obama, along with other world leaders, has chosen the second path. Is there any other alternative?

The Iranian regime has two goals: to become the regional hegemon and to attain nuclear weapons. By releasing tens of billions of dollars in frozen assets and by enabling much more in business revenues, this deal has brought the regime closer to its first goal. And by leaving it as a nuclear threshold state, the deal has positioned Iran for an eventual breakout. That's not just Prime Minister Netanyahu's argument; almost the entire Israeli political spectrum sees this deal as a historic disaster. So do Arab leaders.

Praise the one that breaks the darkness

Revelation 21:9–23

I praise the necklace so long
it drapes, loops, and circles
the neck of a grieving dowager
back to her girlhood play.

Yet, I praise the darkening
urine of amber beads and the fears
engendered by bloodstone;

I praise red coral—millions of gifts
piled by sea creatures' lives.

Under
the hard western sky, I praise
grimy hands, fashioning turquoise
squash blossoms for the necks
of tourists.

I praise the poor woman's
subterfuge, Zircon, and the queen's
throngs of golden chains.

I praise Nancy Pelosi's pearls,

the sound-taste of chrysoprase,
citrine's juiciness, opal's sparks,
amethyst's rumored temperance.

I praise the jeweler's loupe,
peeking down from its glass copula
into jasper's chocolate smear
purloined from Heaven's walls.

Nola Garrett

Theologian Hans Küng once said: "No peace among the nations without peace among the religions. No peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions." In *At the Entrance to the Garden of Eden*, you explored peace among the religions in Israel/Palestine. What's your current assessment of resources for peace and dialogue among Muslims, Jews, and Christians of the region?

Dialogue efforts continue, even if low key, and they are essential. In the Middle East, peace efforts require religious input to win legitimacy on both sides. One of the reasons that the peace process has failed is that it didn't have a religious sensibility. The peace was being negotiated by secular elites who lacked the religious language of so many of their own people.

But the question is: What kind of religious efforts? There is doing good and do-gooding. Doing good is nurturing those people-to-people efforts that still persist, despite everything. Do-gooding is putting all the blame on one side, demonizing one side, rather than relating to the conflict as a tragedy of two traumatized peoples, each with ample reason to fear for its future.

On the basis of my research for *Like Dreamers*, I can say unequivocally that isolating Israel has the opposite effect of what the boycotters intend. In the past, when Israelis sensed that the international community was being fair toward Israel, they were more forthcoming in supporting peace initiatives. But when they felt that Israel was being unfairly judged and condemned, they turned right.

I'll give two examples. The Oslo peace process, which began in 1993 as an Israeli initiative, happened after the fall of the Soviet Union, which led many nations in Eastern Europe and the Third World to establish diplomatic relations with the Jewish state. Israelis no longer felt isolated and so concluded that they could take risks for peace.

The opposite process happened in November 1975, when the United Nations, at the instigation of the Soviet Union, voted to label Zionism a form of racism. That resolution was rescinded by the UN after the fall of the Soviet Union, but the damage was done. Israelis reacted to the first vote by embracing the West Bank settlement movement, which until then had been backed by a minority of Israelis. After the "Zionism is racism" resolution, many felt that if the UN was saying that none of the land belonged to the Jews, we may as well stake our claim to all of it.

For outside criticism to be heard in Israel, it needs to be perceived as fair. The more Israelis feel uniquely singled out—that of all the countries on the planet, Israel is the one whose behavior can't be tolerated by moral people—the more cynical they become about international morality and the more they turn to the hard right. The greatest gift for the hard right is the boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement.

Isn't the growth of the ultra-Orthodox population itself producing a much more hardened right wing that is less open to compromise on land?

The growth of the ultra-Orthodox population—now about 9 percent of Israeli society—is worrying, but not for the reason

you cite. The ultra-Orthodox want more theocracy and oppose religious pluralism, but they are not an obstacle to an eventual peace agreement. The ultra-Orthodox Shas party, which represents Sephardic voters, is on record as supporting the principle of land for peace. The ultra-Orthodox have their agenda, especially ensuring continued government funding for their institutions and continued draft deferments for their young men who study in yeshiva, or religious academies. They are extreme in religious observance, but generally not in issues of war and peace.

How ominous for Israel is the phenomenon of Jewish terrorism?

Religious-based terrorism is perhaps the most insidious form of terror—spiritually, because it debases God’s name and poisons religion, and practically, because it draws from the most potent sources of human inspiration and so is especially hard to uproot. The homegrown Jewish terrorism we’re dealing with today in Israel is in essence religious. It seeks to “purify” the land from other peoples and faiths. It’s also a revolt against Israel as a secular democratic state.

Until now, Israeli society hasn’t taken this threat as seriously as it must. Partly because the numbers of terrorists are small, it can be dismissed as peripheral. But there’s a new realization, even within the government, that this is undermining our society.

The turning point happened in August with two nearly simultaneous atrocities: at the Gay Pride parade in Jerusalem, a 16-year-old girl was murdered by an ultra-Orthodox Jew, and in an arson attack against two homes in a Palestinian village, two family members were burned to death, including a baby. The antigay attacker was a lone wolf, but the terrorists who attacked the Palestinian family were almost certainly organized.

With civil war in Syria, the emergence of ISIS, and the growing power of Iran, a new Middle East seems to be in the making. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has become in some ways a sideline to these other developments. What do you see emerging out of these developments with regard to Israel/Palestine?

For the first time since the collapse of the Oslo process in 2000, I feel a small stirring of optimism and can see a way out. The defining conflict in the Middle East is no longer between Arabs and Israelis but between Sunnis and Shi’ites. Much of the West hasn’t yet internalized this historic shift. The Saudis are now meeting regularly with Israelis and even allowing those meetings to become public knowledge. This is unprecedented.

During the Gaza War last year, even as anti-Israel demonstrations were happening in the West, Israel was receiving urgent messages from Sunni leaders demanding that it destroy the Hamas regime. Hamas is especially detested by many Sunnis for making common cause with Shi’ite Iran—it’s the

“The denial of Jewish legitimacy is rife in Palestinian society.”

only Sunni Muslim Brotherhood organization to break ranks in the Sunni-Shi’ite war.

All of which is to say that the Middle East looks very different from the Middle East than it does from the West. When Israelis look around the region, what we see is that the most intact society left is Israel. I say that with more anxiety than pride, because this is the region in which I live, in which I’m raising a family. My prayer is for a Middle East in which all its peoples will find their safe place. Ultimately, the success of the Jewish homecoming depends on our finding our place in the Middle East.

CC

—David Heim

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United in suffering

by Kathryn Greene-McCreight

*The peace of God, it is no peace,
But strife closed in the sod,
Yet, brothers, pray for but one thing—
The marvelous peace of God.*

(William Alexander Percy, 1924)

IN OUR DOCTORAL SEMINAR we were discussing theories of mission. Our professor, who had grown up in the mission field in China, had personal experience with the ideas we were playing with. He closed the heated discussion with a question that has haunted me ever since: “The real question is not why or whom or how we are to share the gospel. The real question is this: Are we willing to die for the gospel?”

Christians look with horror at the martyrdoms of Christians in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. But we are not horrified enough. We cannot bear to ask what these martyrs might demand of us personally. Our faith and witness often demand so little of us in comparison to theirs. Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s “costly discipleship” may appeal to us on the surface, but ultimately it is frightening, even repellent.

A case in point is the debate over this summer’s slaying of nine Christians at prayer and Bible study in Charleston’s “Mother Emanuel” AME Church. Pundits questioned the perpetrator’s motivation. As if these issues were not inextricably linked, they asked: Were the murders racially motivated? Or did they constitute religious persecution? Why did the survivors at Mother Emanuel so readily embrace a commitment to forgive? The commentators suggested that such forgiveness must be a sick symptom of the racial poison the survivors had been force-fed for generations.

All of these suggestions missed the point, and ultimately belittled Mother Emanuel and her parishioners. Yes, the Charleston nine were black. Yes, the perpetrator was white. Yes, the families quickly declared their intent to forgive in the name of Christ. But like Job’s friends, critics ultimately could not bear to sit with Mother Emanuel in her suffering. They could not allow her to interpret her own experience. How ironic for a culture that wants so much to be free of racism.

Are the rest of us really so different from our brothers and sisters in Christ gunned down at prayer in Charleston, beheaded in Libya, blown up in Syria, or kidnapped and beaten in Iraq? Are they heroes in the faith with whom we can

never truly identify? What can it mean for us when we hear Paul say that he is completing what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ for the sake of the church? Are we not each also called to suffer for the sake of the body of Christ? Can we even begin to imagine that martyrdom could be part of our own vocation?

At the April 2015 meeting of the Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission, Pope Francis remarked that the bond that unites all Christians is found in the martyrdom of those who endure persecution and violence because of their faith.

Echoing Pope John Paul II and yet true to his own voice, Pope Francis implied that ecumenical meetings are well and good, but ultimately mean little if we presume that our unity hinges on our agreements.

Martyrdom is an activity tied to and indeed demanded by our baptismal identity.

In a sense, Pope Francis was pointing to the abiding truth of Tertullian’s dictum: “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.” Our life together is nourished by the blood of the martyrs because it is mingled with the blood of Jesus. This is what makes the church strong. Ironically, this is what makes for “church growth.” Our ecumenical unity dwells in the witness of Christian martyrs and fulfills Jesus’ high priestly prayer that we “may all be one” (John 17:21).

If Pope Francis is right, ecumenical work does not take shape at the level of meetings and discussions and documents. It is found in the self-offering of those who are baptized into Christ’s death and resurrection, and who witness to Jesus’ reconciling love with the spilling of their own blood. True justice and peace grow out of the Holy Spirit’s empowering ordinary people called to extraordinary witness like those in Libya, Egypt, Iraq, Pakistan, South Sudan, and South Carolina. These people are really not so much different from us. We are one

Kathryn Greene-McCreight is associate chaplain at the Episcopal Church at Yale University. This article is from her forthcoming book, I Am with You: The Archbishop of Canterbury’s Lent Book 2016.

with them as together we lift high the cross of Christ, the tree of life.

The word *martyr* means “witness.” Martyrs are signposts, pointing like John the Baptist to Jesus: “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). Being this kind of signpost is more than simply being “saints.” According to Romans 6, we are all saints by virtue of our baptism into the death of Jesus. When Paul addresses his letters “to the saints at . . .” he is not simply referring to people who attend worship together in a particular city in the first century.

But martyrdom is more than this. It is more than a state of being. It is more than seeing ourselves as standing among the great cloud of witnesses. Martyrdom is an activity tied to and indeed demanded by our baptismal identity.

Christian martyrdom is never to be sought for fame or glory. If there is a way to remain steadfast in Christian witness without spilling one’s blood, one must choose that way. For the Christian, martyrdom is never to be enacted as a means of political protest. It is never accomplished in pursuit of spiritual health, ecstatic vision, or self-enlightenment. This makes Christian martyrdom distinct from other types of religious martyrdom.

Christian martyrdom itself is never to be romanticized. These martyrs are not heroes any more than we are. The

Charleston nine did not ask for their murder. They did not have any say in their martyrdom. Yet their community received the slayings in an act of forgiving the perpetrator, an embodiment of the peace and healing that comes in Jesus Christ.

Not all Christian martyrs lose their lives in their witness. In the fifth century, St. Jerome made a distinction between different types of martyrs. Red martyrs (or wet martyrs) are those who lose their lives for the sake of the name of Jesus. They are “red” because their own blood was spilled in their refusal to deny Christ. White martyrs (or dry martyrs) are those who embrace the cruciform life in the humdrum of their own daily walk. For most of us, our lives do not require the shedding of our own blood.

This is in part because physical death is not the only way for Christians to die to self. It is our decrease alone that brings the increase of love. In the 12th century, St. Catherine of Siena put it this way: “By how much the more a person dies to himself, by so much more they live to God.” In a culture that’s fond of comfort, this can be a difficult word carrying a very different sense of what makes for well-being.

Scripture tells us that if we live at the foot of the cross we will encounter affliction, but that this affliction is accompanied by consolation. This is in part because affliction tied to the cruciform life is not to be endured in isolation from the body of Christ. Our unity with Christ establishes and grounds our unity



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with each other. This means that even, and maybe especially, through our affliction we make Christ known. This is for our personal and communal benefit and well-being.

For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ. If we are being afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation; if we are being consoled, it is for your consolation, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we are also suffering (2 Cor. 1:5–6).

When grounded in Christ's death and resurrection, our affliction yields a joy that shields us from the powers of death. Even though we may suffer, we are not crushed. Even in our pain and confusion when God may seem absent, by the power of the Holy Spirit we are protected from complete despair. And by carrying in our bodies the death of Jesus we make visible his life. Each of us is to make evident the power that belongs to God and not to us (2 Cor. 4:7–12).

The Christian martyr absorbs hatred and violence in the name of Jesus, and hands it all back to Christ for the sake of the world. In this way, the Christian martyr furthers the reconciling work of the Lord. These deeds of self-giving in turn spread the proclamation of the gospel. Where one might have thought that murder would stifle the cry for peace, in fact it amplifies it. This is why the "blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."

It holds forth the paradox of how bearing the cross witnesses to the power of the resurrection.

Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." In the old hymn "They Cast Their Nets in Galilee," William Alexander Percy speaks poignantly of this: "The peace of God, it is no peace, but strife closed in the sod; Yet let us pray for but one thing—that marvelous peace of God." Martin Luther King Jr. knew that the blood of Abel still cries out to the Lord from the ground. He knew that, in his own strife "closed in the sod," violence absorbed into the grave of Christ does not silence the voice of the innocent suffering of the righteous. He knew that in our fallen world violence when returned with further violence only begets hatred. But in Christ the power of God overrules even the powers of violence and death and brings healing.

Wherever we Christians struggle in our own various afflictions to witness to the self-giving of Christ, he again closes "strife in the sod." There the church flourishes. There Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17 is fulfilled.

Because Thomas was not present with the disciples when the risen Jesus appeared to them, he refused to believe that the risen Jesus had appeared to the disciples. He needed to see Jesus himself to be assured that it was really him. When Jesus appeared again later, he invited Thomas to probe his wounds. Thomas's doubt turned to authentication: "My Lord and my God!" Jesus

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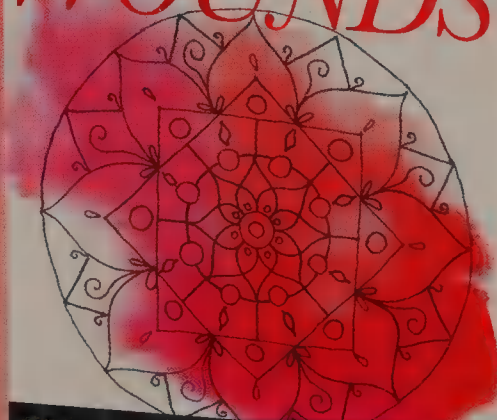
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said: "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe" (John 20:29). Jesus' invitation for Thomas to probe his wounds prompted Thomas's confession, an authentication that expanded the witness to the risen Lord even to those "who have not seen and yet have come to believe." This continues to our day.

While the red (wet) martyr is never to seek death, the white (dry) martyr has the privilege of seeking out places of witness. The self-giving which leads to the spreading of the kingdom is also the vocation of the white martyr. Where in our lives can we see ourselves emptying our hands for the name of Jesus, trusting that God will fill them? This is very difficult for those of us who perceive our hands already to be full. Many of us in the West expect that material and bodily comfort should be the norm. But the vocation of the white martyr is to seek fullness of life only by being emptied.

Our vocation to martyrdom, too, is tied to the invitation to bury ourselves in the wounds of Christ. It is there that we find sorrow and love mingled in perfection in a way we do not experience anywhere else. As we relinquish our own afflictions into the wounds of Christ, we too find sorrow and love poured out together in a way that "fills our hearts brimful and breaks them too."

The third-century biblical interpreter Origen wrote in the prologue to his *Contra Celsum* that Jesus' silence at his trial shapes our own vocation. Because Jesus was silent before his

accusers at his passion, the responsibility is now on us to be his voice. This vocation will take a different shape for each of us.

Here is one example of how a 20th-century North American took up her vocation as a white martyr. She was employed by a major chemical company bidding on a contract to develop nerve gas components for the U.S. Army. The only purpose of this gas was indiscriminate slaughter. Use of the gas could not

Can we lay down our pain as an offering to Christ and to the church?

be confined to any specific target of war: an air base, naval port, weapons plant. The manufacturers and buyers of the gas could not rule out the possibility that its deployment might result in civilian casualties. Faithful to the Lord of life, this woman refused to participate in the development of the chemical component of this deadly gas and was fired. She lost her livelihood.

But white martyrdom does not need to be this dramatic. Can we set our own sufferings, puny as they may seem, at the foot of the cross? Can we lay down our pain as an offering to Christ and to the church? Can we even rejoice in our sufferings, "completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church" (Col. 1:24)? We may need to pray hard and think creatively here. But we do not need to look far.

Suffering is simply part of our fallen condition. It is already part of our lives. Afflictions surround us: loss of loved ones, failing health, dashed hopes and dreams. When we place this suffering at the foot of the cross, we may be able to point beyond ourselves to the God who redeems our griefs and draws us into the light of his presence. We might in this way serve as white martyrs, signposts and witnesses to Christ. This kind of living into our afflictions can forge in us gifts of patience, hope, compassion, and peace that can witness to Christ in powerful ways. Thus we can give voice to Christ, who went to the cross in silence.

My professor's question remains: Would we be willing to confess the name of Jesus even at the sword? Most of us may not encounter that blade. For many of us that question may become: Can we witness to the reality that the peace of God is indeed strife closed in the sod? Maybe white martyrdom could provide a framework for the privilege to respond to that question in our time, context, and vocation.

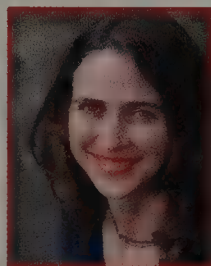
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Faith MATTERS

by Stephanie Paulsell

Words that count

I LOVE THIS TIME of year, both at school and at church. It's a season of regathering and in-gathering and joyful reconnection with friends after the summer's adventures. It's also a time when our communities are enlivened by people we meet for the first time. New students arrive with fresh questions and ideas, new children turn up in Sunday school, and visitors drop by hoping the church can help them find ways to be of service. In these bright fall days, new energies and hopes nearly crackle in the air.

It can also be an anxious time, because we want the quality of our invitation to our communities to match the hopeful aspirations of those who come through the door. Have we planned the right programs, chosen the right curricula? As we consider the invitation we hope to offer, it's worth remembering the things that drew us to the life of faith, the planned and the unplanned, the organized and the accidental.

Years ago I taught a course on religious education with a gifted graduate student who recounted aspects of her Jewish education for our mostly Christian students. Her introduction to the religious life of her community included being invited by her teachers to lick honey from the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, a practice that dates back at least to the Middle Ages. This delicious invitation to the study of Hebrew linked study and sweetness forever in her imagination, as her teachers hoped it would.

My own early memories of religious education are not as auspicious. My first Sunday school teacher was my mother, and my first memories of church are of hiding and crying under the child-sized tables because I didn't want to share her with other children. The religious education that mattered most was the one I received with my sister under the crook of our mother's arm as she read to us. Our sacred texts were works by Dr. Seuss, Mother Goose, Ezra Jack Keats, and Maurice Sendak. The ritual of settling in together, the repeated readings of the same stories, and the proximity of our mother bathed everything she read to us in a kind of sacredness. Snuggled up together on the couch or in bed, it felt as if we had all the time in the world to roll the words on our tongues, feel their rhythms in our bodies, and discover the secrets that a well-drawn picture could hold. My mother gave me the foundation of my religious life—the feeling of having embarked on something of inexhaustible significance, something we would never finish or solve, an open-ended mystery we could seek in our books and, in Sendak's phrase, in “the world all around.”

When my daughter was a little girl, I could never predict

what invitation she would hear at church. Like my mother, I was my daughter's first Sunday school teacher, and I always hoped that the stories and songs we shared in class would invite my kids into an exploration of life with God. But nothing I did came close to the impact of a “minute for mission” offered by a leader of our church. He began by talking about how he liked to wake up before the sun rose because he felt closest to God in the early morning stillness. The next morning, I woke at 5:30 to find my daughter awake and sitting at the window. “What are you doing?” I asked. “I'm watching for God, like John does,” she replied.

These feelings and convictions—that study is as sweet as honey, that reading is as intimate and mysterious as prayer, that we long for a glimpse of God's presence and will wake up early to seek it—are not easy to communicate, even in church. It's hard to find the right words to express them. But these early fall days, when our communities feel the most porous, are an opportunity to try. What matters most is our willingness to speak with each other about the things that matter most to us.

Study can be as sweet as honey, as mysterious as prayer.

The Christian calendar gives us a saint for this work: St. Jerome, the fourth-century scholar whose translations of the Old and New Testaments formed the basis of the Latin Vulgate. September 30 is the feast day of this patron saint of translators who stands at the threshold of our rich religious inheritance and beckons us to enter. Jerome devoted his life to making scriptures first written in Hebrew and Greek available in a different language. His work of translation is our work too.

As Jerome knew, our attempts to cross the boundaries of language draw us into relationship with others—in Jerome's case, with the rabbis who taught him to read the Hebrew text and with the women who supported his work and shared his devotion to prayer and study. His translations opened the Bible to the people of his time and place and far beyond it. And his work of translation opened him to others' lives. This fall we have an opportunity to translate and to be translated, to find words for what matters most to us, and to be changed by the encounter with what matters to others.

Stephanie Paulsell teaches at Harvard Divinity School.

IN Review

White space, black lives

by M. T. Dávila

I received the request to review *Stand Your Ground* a few weeks after Freddie Gray was killed while being transported in a Baltimore police van. His death incited protests reminiscent of events in Ferguson, Missouri, after Michael Brown was killed by a police officer a few months before. While I was reading the book, a police officer in McKinney, Texas, pulled his gun on teens at a pool party and violently pinned a 14-year-old girl to the ground. I became apprehensive about reading the book as Kelly Brown Douglas's main thesis was displayed in the news again and again. Stand-your-ground culture and the stand-your-guard war represent the perennial cost to black bodies of the persistent myth of Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism.

The final words from Audre Lorde's 1978 poem "Litany for Survival"—"we were never meant to survive"—provide a suitable historical framework for conversations about racial justice in the United States in the year since Ferguson. Douglas echoes the narrative arc in Lorde's poem, beginning her analysis with a study of Tacitus's first-century treatise *Germania*, which promoted Germanic superiority in political, moral, economic, and intellectual spheres. Later, Douglas writes, "the English considered themselves the descendants of the Germanic tribes identified by Tacitus."

The narrative of Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism was imported by the Pilgrims, and civic and religious legitimation was woven into the fabric of early U.S. political culture and identity: with divine blessing, a new nation would be built, and the people of the nation would display Christian character. Douglas places

the stand-your-ground war within this context of Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism.

Douglas's historical documentation is rich and complex. From the founders' indictment of black bodies and of slave intellect and moral will, to sermons contending that the master-slave relationship was divinely ordained; from treatises describing black persons as inherently criminal and violent, to Supreme Court decisions indicating that assimilation was impossible, whites protected their space from blacks. In a nation shaped by Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism, white space is understood as the realm of the exceptional and the free, the morally good and the religiously pure. The presence of a free black body is seen as a violation, a crime, an affront to God, and a sin punishable by violence, lynching, and death. White space is wherever a white person happens to be, and attacks on black persons who violate that space are justified. Stand-your-ground laws are created to protect white space from invasion by black bodies.

The deaths of Trayvon Martin, Renisha McBride, Jonathan Ferrell, and Jordan Davis are in constant conversation with Douglas's historical, philosophical, and theological discussion of Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism. Along with many others, Douglas asks whether Trayvon and Jordan were as free as their murderers to stand their own ground. According to a national narrative that privileges the construction of whiteness as a divinely sanctioned project, murdered black men and women are guilty of the violence done to them, both before and after their deaths. They are demonized in the media as suspect and criminal simply because they were black and free in the wrong



Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God

By Kelly Brown Douglas

Orbis, 256 pp., \$24.00 paperback

space—that is, space that was not theirs to begin with. The very real suffering of these men and women and Douglas's conversations with her own son ground each chapter in the current lives of black individuals—in their lamentations, their hopes, and the very real threats to their personhood.

Douglas posits that black faith is an antidote to stand-your-ground culture. First developed in the bowels of slave ships and on plantations, black faith is the understanding that freedom is a corollary of the divine life, and that it therefore lies beyond the atrophied and contingent definitions of freedom that protect a spirit of domination and exclusion. More important, God's freedom stands in sharp contrast to the myth of Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism and racial superiority. It demands that exceptionalism be dismantled, and it empowers the imprisoned to create a new order of true freedom for all. Black faith develops amid the lamentation of captivity; it is grounded in the belief that all is connected in the sacred. The Christian narratives of the masters' Bibles did not contradict this spiritual grounding, but affirmed it in the witness of a God who liberates in the midst of the vicissitudes of history.

In Jesus' life, crucifixion, and resurrection, black faith finds the ultimate reversal of the crucifixions of black bodies of

M. T. Dávila teaches Christian ethics at Andover Newton Theological School.

young men and women at the hands of police officers and of vigilantes who are overeager to protect their white space. Douglas suggests that the character assassination that followed the murders of Trayvon and Jordan can be dismantled by the resurrection of the whole lives of these human beings: the high school graduations, the dreams of military service, the hopes for a college education, the perfect score in a game or on a test, and all the other moments that made up their lives.

The embodied prophetic witness of black faith—the witness of Martin Luther King Jr. and many others—promotes a full vision of human freedom and a refashioning of the nation that does not depend on the myth of Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism. So do today's #BlackLivesMatter movement and the #IfIDieInPoliceCustody campaign. As Douglas suggests, they signal the kairos that is the current moment, when the destruction of the black body is an indictment of Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism in the churches and in civic life.

This volume is not an easy read, but it is a necessary one. Douglas takes such great pains to detail the historical trajectory of stand-your-ground culture and identity that at times her theological analysis feels rushed and incomplete. No matter. She presents a serious and urgent invitation to reflection, conversation, and action that churches must not ignore. The United States is indeed at a kairos moment, and it bears the names Trayvon, Renisha, Jordan, Jonathan, Michael, Tamir, Sandra, Rekia, Freddie, Eric, Tanesha, Miriam, and too many others.



Between the World and Me

By Ta-Nehisi Coates
Spiegel & Grau, 176 pp., \$24.00

To talk about Ta-Nehisi Coates's social gospel may seem absurd. One, Coates is an unabashed atheist. Two, his alleged pessimism regarding America's ability to progress beyond white supremacy appears to run directly against the root meaning of gospel—good news. And yet as a religious person reading *Between the World and Me*, I find his words to be deeply insightful and helpful for thinking not only about race, society, and U.S. history, but also about the place of faith within that nexus.

Addressed to his adolescent son, Coates's book is a powerful and highly nuanced take on a black male's life in the United States. It displays a thoroughgoing physicality in its language. Coates tells his son: "You must always remember that the sociology, the history, the economics, the graphs, the charts, the regression all land, with great violence, upon the body." Violence upon the body is a concept that Coates presses on the reader at every turn. He does not want you to merely think about slavery, West Baltimore, or police violence in Washington, D.C. He wants you to feel it in the gut while you stare at the flesh behind the statistics—at the human loves severed and the fears provoked.

Reviewed by Daniel José Camacho, a master of divinity student at Duke Divinity School. He tweets @DanielJCamacho.

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A recurring theme throughout the book is what Coates calls the Dream: a useful myth about innocence, upward mobility, and safety that warps how people depict this country's history and present realities. The Dream, he explains, is tied to whiteness and to "those who believe themselves to be white."

With subtle language, Coates tackles whiteness as an evolving social performance in U.S. history. The way in which he ties whiteness to belief brings to mind the book *Redeeming Mulatto*, in which theologian Brian Bantum describes whiteness as a modality of faith, an assertion of belief grounded in false purity.

Although Coates writes that he outgrew his black nationalism as he transitioned from Baltimore to Howard University, he upholds what may be described as a nonontological blackness: although race is socially constructed and blackness is not biological, blackness should not be abandoned in some post-racial quest. Coates describes his experience at Howard as a journey to Mecca;

greater exposure to the black diaspora there precipitated a more expansive notion of blackness. For Coates, blackness is more than simply something whiteness created; blackness represents "the beautiful things, all the language and mannerisms, all the food and music, all the literature and philosophy, all the common language that they fashioned like diamonds under the weight of the Dream." Moreover, he writes, "black power births a kind of understanding that illuminates all the galaxies in their truest colors."

Though the initial reception of *Between the World and Me* became overly burdened by unproductive comparisons between Coates and James Baldwin, there are productive comparisons to be made between the two writers. Both stand outside the church and perceptively see Christianity's entanglement with the white supremacy of Western civilization in ways that can be illuminating for Christians if they allow themselves to look. Baldwin's vision goes farther in this case, perhaps because he was once a preacher. Yet Coates also interrogates the scaffolding of this entanglement.

Coates is not shy about his lack of faith. He writes: "I have no praise anthems, nor old Negro spirituals. The spirit and soul are the body and brain, which are destructible—that is precisely why they are so precious." Nevertheless, he is respectful and intrigued when confronted by black faith. We see this when he talks to Mabel Jones, the mother of

Prince Jones, who was killed by a police officer in 2006. We see it when he describes looking at the faces of sit-in protesters of the 1960s: "I think they are fastened to their god, a god whom I cannot know and in whom I do not believe. But, god or not, the armor is all over them, and it is real."

Coates's atheism is fueled by questions about providence and theodicy:

You must resist the common urge toward the comforting narrative of divine law, toward fairy tales that imply some irrepressible justice. The enslaved were not bricks in your road, and their lives were not chapters in your redemptive history. They were people turned to fuel for the American machine. Enslavement was not destined to end, and it is wrong to claim our present circumstance—no matter how improved—as the redemption for the lives of people who never asked for the posthumous, untouchable glory of dying for their children. Our triumphs can never compensate for this. Perhaps our triumphs are not even the point.

In resisting a certain kind of theological, providential reading of black suffering in the United States, Coates shares the concerns of womanist theologians such as Emilie Townes, who rejects the idea that suffering is God's will and who understands it instead as outrage.

Christians can learn from Coates's questioning of American theological myths. I don't want to claim Coates for Christian faith in some violent way; neither am I practicing some thinly veiled apologetics or evangelism as occurred in Baldwin's exchange with Elijah Muhammad in *The Fire Next Time*. But maybe Coates's atheism, notwithstanding the reductive materialism, is precisely the type of atheism that Christians in America need. In fact, some eminent theologians have already been arguing this.

Many Christians in the United States have calibrated their God and their faith to the myth of the American dream. We have confused tragedy with providence, conquest with destiny, human-made policies with natural law. Although the Bible

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repeatedly says that liberation requires memory of bondage and torture, the American dream simply shrugs and asserts that America focuses on the future and transcends old sins. So, when Coates writes that “America understands itself as God’s handiwork, but the black body is the clearest evidence that America is the work of men,” it is good news. If God is not the author of American nightmares, then people are. And if people are, then people can, in principle, bring about change.

I’ll admit that I have a non-pessimistic reading of Coates’s alleged pessimism. There are indeed times when Coates’s language about white supremacy verges on a kind of determinism. For example, when he calls white supremacy “an intelligence, a sentience, a default setting to which, likely to the end of our days, we must invariably return,” he comes close to ontologizing white supremacy and turning it into an immutable force of nature. Yet his pessimism lies in thinking that change is unlikely, not that change is impossible. When discussing police brutality and criminal justice, he reminds his readers that “democratic will” has sanctioned and allowed such abuses.

Coates’s cold-blooded account of history may be short on hope and solutions, but providing hope and solutions shouldn’t necessarily be his job. It is our job to think about and act toward possibilities beyond white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism.

Pessimism aside, Coates’s social vision can be instructive. Many persistent inequalities are the legacy of human engineering and aren’t proofs of cultural pathologies or insufficient virtue. To understand this means to reimagine certain construals of the doctrine that all are created equal—construals that still require some people to be at least twice as good as others.

Between the World and Me paints a complicated picture of religion and its role in what Coates calls “the struggle.” For those thinking theologically about America’s social architecture, his words are a much needed challenge. And with his atheism concerning many of America’s gods, Coates may be surprised to find some religious allies.

Afterwar: Healing the Moral Wounds of Our Soldiers

By Nancy Sherman
Oxford University Press, 256 pp., \$24.95

We are a part of the homecoming—we are implicated in their wars,” writes Nancy Sherman, one of the leading voices in the emerging discourse concerning military moral injury. Sherman seeks to mobilize a broad base of societal engagement with the postdeployment homecomings of our nation’s service members. The message of her book *Afterwar* is clear: society must understand the totality of human experiences of war, including its moral dimensions.

Afterwar is chiefly concerned with the moral wounds of war, which are coming to be called moral injury: the psychological, physiological, and spiritual consequences of having taken actions that transgressed and overwhelmed one’s moral standards and expectations. Moral injury can also be generated by more general conditions in which one’s sense of personal responsibility is activated, generating emotions such as shame, guilt, disgust, or rage.

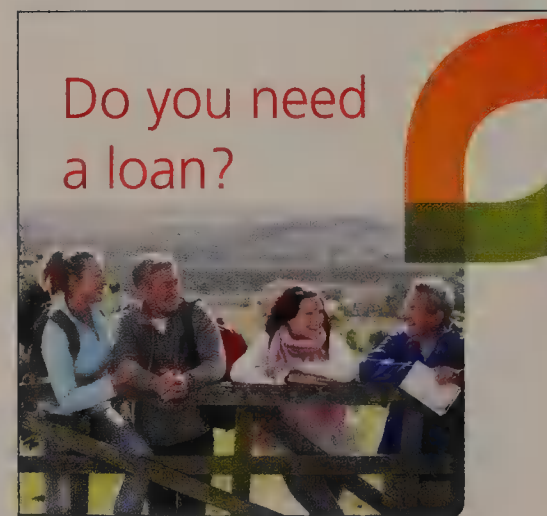
Sherman asserts that “moral wounds demand moral healing,” and her vision of moral repair is a relational one that necessitates interpersonal engagement. She criticizes superficial nationalistic gestures that celebrate the troops but fail to honor their complex experiences. She was inspired by spending time with veterans at Walter Reed Medical Center, and she sees herself as participating in a larger community of empathetic listeners. Sherman’s book does not consider the role of religious congregations, but her vision of engaged communities of empathy and hope would resonate with many church congregations.

Unfortunately, this book demonstrates two significant shortcomings in the literature on moral injury. First, like Jonathan Shay and Ed Tick, both widely cited in this field, Sherman relies on

Greek mythology to explore moral injury. This move asserts that moral injury has been around a long time, but with so much immediate evidence to draw on, referencing the Greeks seems superfluous. This problem is even more pronounced when we consider the realities of modern warfare. The lack of clear battle lines and the ambiguity about who is an enemy combatant, for example, present moral challenges never faced by the cast of the *Iliad*.

A second limitation that pervades the discourse on military moral injury is acquiescence to the norms of medical diagnosis and treatment. Moral conflict and anguish are viewed as wounds or injuries in need of repair or healing. This line of response reinforces the assumptions that too often cast our nation’s veterans as victims of their experiences rather than as resilient survivors seeking to write new chapters of their lives. Sherman does not adequately problematize the medical paradigm.

It is necessary to reframe our assump-



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Reviewed by Zachary Moon, a military chaplain
and author of *Coming Home: Ministry That
Matters with Veterans and Military Families*
(Chalice).

CHURCH IN THE MAKING

"Being church together as older and younger Christians makes us aware of our differing opinions, needs, and viewpoints.

"The problem arises when we don't understand that the dominant culture reflects a particular generation. We confuse prevalence with sacredness. The distinctions become more acute as we close some churches and plant new ones.

"We should remember that the churches planted today also reflect a particular culture. The key will be to celebrate and support differences and interpret them for one another."



"Carol Howard Merritt has a welcome (if unsettling) clarity about where the church is now as well as an inspired vision of where it ought to be."

— Paul Brainerd Rauschenbush, executive religion editor of the *Huffington Post*

Carol Howard Merritt writes *Church in the Making* for the *Christian Century*.

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tions about moral anguish. We must realize that the challenges and opportunities of these transitions between the military and civilian worlds are manifested in relationships. Veterans who cannot establish trustworthy and engaging relationships with others back home are likely to become socially isolated and vulnerable to harmful coping strategies. However, veterans who make connections, receive the benefit of others' patience and persistence, and are able to take risks and find compassion are likely to find many sources of nourishment and opportunities to thrive.

Sherman's book is critically important at this time for our nation. All of us have a role to play and all of us are needed. In October 2015, hundreds of veterans, military family members, health-care professionals, ministers, and other concerned citizens will gather in Kansas City for the first national conference on military moral injury and soul repair. Sherman's voice is adding to the spirit of this growing movement.

The challenges of postdeployment reentry and reintegration are not merely mental health issues; we will continue to fail if we do nothing more than medicate moral anguish. We all can contribute to improving future outcomes for our nation's veterans and their families.

Moral anguish generated during war is not solely the responsibility of our nation's veterans; it is the burden of our nation as a whole. War is a supremely ugly and horrific undertaking, so to treat its costs only superficially is an act of cruelty. When civilians simply say "Thank you for your service" or avoid the matter altogether when speaking with veterans and military family members, we are refusing to acknowledge our shared culpability.

Our nation's congregations have a unique and powerful role to play in postdeployment reentry and reintegration. Our traditions, scriptures, and sacramental practices, as well as the communities themselves, are vital resources for providing empathy and compassion, collaborating in service-based projects that reaffirm dignity and leadership capacities, and hearing the stories when people are ready to tell them. Military service involves loss of many kinds: the death or

injury of loved ones, the loss of stability and consistent community relationships, and changing demands on families during different phases of the cycles of deployment. If our congregations could do one thing well that would make a significant difference in the lives of many veterans and military families, it would be in supporting the grief work that is needed for processing all these different kinds of loss.

How to Read the Bible

By Harvey Cox

HarperOne, 272 pp., \$26.99

Harvey Cox, professor of divinity at Harvard Divinity School and a well-traveled interpreter of things secular and spiritual, provides a word of guidance to those who wish to find in the Bible spiritual meaning for today. Cox made his name in the 1960s with his book *The Secular City*, but in a more recent book, *The Future of Faith*, he suggests that we have entered the "age of the Spirit," and he considers the Bible to be an important resource for this age. However, for the Bible to belong not only to the church or the academy but also to the growing number of people who consider themselves spiritual but not religious, a guidebook is needed. This he provides in *How to Read the Bible*.

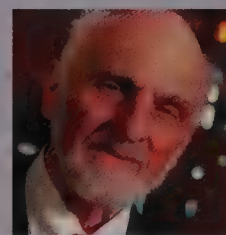
Though Cox recognizes the need to take into consideration what biblical writings meant to the authors and the original audience, what is most important to him is what the text means today. So, for example, it doesn't matter that Paul didn't intend for 1 Corinthians 13 to be read at weddings. What matters is that it is deemed a valuable word to celebrate the practice of love.

How to Read the Bible is rooted in Cox's own journey from reading the Bible in a flat, literalistic manner to his engagement in seminary with the historical-

Reviewed by Robert D. Cornwall, pastor of Central Woodward Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Troy, Michigan, and editor of Sharing the Practice, the journal of the Academy of Parish Clergy.

critical method. He appreciates the importance of this method, but it still left him back in the ancient world. It was the civil rights movement that helped him discover the importance of what he calls a "spiritual reading" of the Bible. He learned that the Bible is "a living record of an open-ended history of which we can have a part. It is still an unfinished story."

Cox sees himself as a bridge between secular and religious worlds, so it is not surprising that he finds liberation theology attractive. And although he values the insights of biblical studies professionals,




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he's more interested in how laypeople engage the Bible. Thus he offers suggestions for how the Bible might be read today while introducing readers to scholarly tools, resources, and theories that can help them understand what biblical writings meant to their original audience. Writing as a knowledgeable generalist rather than an expert in biblical studies, Cox offers tips on how to engage in the study of the Bible, giving sidebar attention to such issues as choosing a translation of the Bible and using biblical commentaries.

This book isn't meant to be a comprehensive introduction to the study of the Bible. So although Cox explores the meaning of Job, he doesn't offer a chapter on Proverbs or the Psalms. In taking up the Gospels, he asks the question of who Jesus is today, focusing his attention on the synoptic Gospels while largely ignoring John. Hoping to reclaim the apostle to the gentiles, he distinguishes Paul's "genuine letters" from the disputed ones while cautioning the reader to

remember Paul's context and background. Concerned about what he considers dangerous readings of Revelation, he employs the history of interpretative method to show both that Revelation has had an uncertain place in the canon and has been read in a variety of ways. What he doesn't do is go into detail regarding apocalyptic literature as a genre.

To further the conversation about how we read the Bible today, Cox suggests the importance of reading "from below," as the various liberationist theologies do, and through engagement with other religions. He notes the offerings of the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh, as well as a variety of artistic interpretations, including those found in film and literature.

As a liberal theologian who has spent his career exploring the connections between religious and secular worlds, Cox seeks to address those who claim that the Bible is obsolete and dangerous. As to the first, he's convinced there is much spiritual wisdom still to be found within its pages. And as to the second, he concedes that it can indeed be a dangerous book, but insists that when it is read with discernment, its pages can reveal to the reader knowledge of both God and self; as all religious traditions demonstrate, "the knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves are inseparable."

Cox writes with an engaging style and is a theologically astute travel guide. He hits the highlights, introduces us to some of the tools used by scholars, and invites us to read the Bible with an eye to its contemporary effect and meaning. While his book has an eccentric feel to it, if Cox helps improve biblical literacy, he will have accomplished a great deal.

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If you would like to write an article for the CENTURY, please send a query to submissions@christiancentury.org or to Submissions, The Christian Century, 104 S. Michigan Ave., Suite 1100, Chicago, IL 60603. Allow four to six weeks for a response from our editors. We do not consider unsolicited manuscripts for our regular columns or book reviews.

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BookMarks

Nine Essential Things I've Learned about Life

Harold S. Kushner
Knopf, 192 pp., \$23.95

When Kushner began his vocation as a rabbi, he soon discovered that the members of his synagogue were asking questions he had not encountered in seminary. This awakening led to a reorientation of his faith away from a "command and obey" religion to one of seeing how the ways of God add meaning and depth to life. Kushner began his first book, back in 1981, thus: "There is only one question which really matters: why do bad things happen to good people?" Now he asks what he considers an equally fundamental question: "Can we trust the world? Is ours a world in which people can count on getting what they deserve?" "Not yet," he says. "The heirs of Abraham, whether they identify themselves as Jews, Christians, or Muslims, honor Abraham's memory by sharing his faith that the world we live in is not yet what God meant it to be, and by working to bring about the day when what should be, will be."

Glass Ceilings and Dirt Floors: Women, Work, and the Global Economy

By Christine Firer Hinze
Paulist Press, 176 pp., \$13.95 paperback

Hitting a glass ceiling is a metaphor for the experience professional women have of finding subtle obstacles in the way of their advancement. But most working women in the world don't hit a glass ceiling. They scratch out a meager income while caring for domestic concerns at home. For both groups of women, the market economy doesn't take into consideration the labor they put into what Hinze calls "care work," household work that is essential to the well-being of families. Drawing on both feminist and Catholic ethics, she calls for a reorientation of our thinking to provide for both a flourishing economy and flourishing households, offering six practical ways to attain this balance.

Screen time

I've been screening churches in my new city of Vancouver, and I guess you could say they've been "screening" me. Almost every church I've visited uses a screen in its sanctuary during worship. In the 1980s or '90s this might have been a signal that a congregation had taken a side in the worship wars. Now it's just a sign that a church is open and functioning.

One congregation showed a funny video of Canadians singing an ode to Canada Day (replete with a poke at American politics). Another screen featured a long clip from the movie *Frozen*. What all this had to do with Jesus was not clear. The video clips were pleasant distractions, brief entertainment in the context of worship.

But other uses of screens struck me as more theologically intentional. One congregation featured background images of the city of Vancouver. These appeared before and after worship and during announcements. The images were not just beautiful. They announced that this was a church not only in but *for* a city. God's kingdom always comes in particular settings, and the church is called to love its neighborhood, as God does in Christ's incarnation. This same church asked its preachers to say, "You can follow along as I read in your pew Bibles, or the words will be on the screen . . ." I noticed nary a Bible opening. All heads were up.

Something may be lost here—fewer of us can flip through a Bible to find a passage. But shaming somebody at that particular moment is probably not a way to reverse this trend.

One clear winner for use of screens in worship is its effectiveness in conveying song lyrics and announcements. Having

everybody looking up instead of down with their noses buried in their books helps us sing out, see one another, and generally stand up straight. Scrolling announcements before and after church and during the offering helps deflect the zombie-like way announcements have of reappearing in the liturgy. The screen might be one more scythe with which to clear them away.

At a Pentecostal church, the minister was preaching a series on "Who Is Jesus?" He played a video of Bono being interviewed on Irish TV by a seemingly annoyed host who couldn't believe that Bono prayed to Christ as God. Bono stood his ground and bore witness to his faith in a way that inspired confidence. If a rock star can do it, who can't? The congregation burst into applause. The clip was short, punchy, well-introduced, and on point. It didn't leave me saying, "I wonder what that had to do with the price of tea in China?" but rather, "Am I ready to bear witness if a camera is rolling and an interviewer is sneering?"

I started using screens myself in worship during my four years as pastor in Boone, North Carolina. Images on websites like textweek.com became another form of commentary, especially on narrative texts that had traditional fine art images.

At first I flashed up too many of these, but later I'd use only one or two and comment more extensively on each, sometimes with a faux art history professor laser pointer. Inspired by Henri Nouwen's *The Return of the Prodigal Son* and his commentary on Rembrandt, I built whole sermons around single



PHOTO © DESIGN PICS

LOOKING UP: Screens can be distractions or vehicles of testimony.

images. I also flashed long quotations from the Bible and other sources. These quotations can fly by hearers if there's no visual reinforcement—with it you have more of a chance of connecting. I e-mailed the preacher of a screenless church here to ask for a copy of a poem he'd used in worship. I was almost annoyed when I couldn't see it as he was reading it.

The best use of screens is to offer testimony: put one of God's people in front of a camera and have that person talk about God's work. Preparation time allows tight editing and puts the speaker in the best possible light. In Boone we had professional videos made of ministry events held outside of Sunday morning, then showed them in worship. Videos of a mission trip or tithing testimony were kept short, set to music, and edited for humor and theology. They *worked*.

Catholic, Anglican, and Orthodox Christians have always had their "smells and bells," things to taste and see in the context of worship: candles and crosses and bread and wine and chalice and font. Lower-church Protestants seem to have dived into the use of screens as if we've been missing something. The good news is there's good news here.

The author is Jason Byassee, who teaches homiletics at Vancouver School of Theology.



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by Philip Jenkins

n o t e s f r o m t h e GLOBAL CHURCH

In recent years, some Christian denominations have discovered that their membership rolls are growing mightily in the Global South. Often those growing Christian communities are quite conservative on issues of gender and sexuality. We are now seeing such conflicts among the Seventh-day Adventists, which has passionately debated the ordination of women. A church that was once regarded as a purely U.S. phenomenon has become one of the world's fastest growing and most diverse.

The Adventists grew out of the millenarian fervor that swept the United States in the 1840s. In 1844, William Miller warned of the Christ's imminent return and the world's destruction. In fact, he did so twice, and the double failure provoked what is termed the Great Disappointment. A remnant of Millerites then reconstructed their movement under the visionary leadership of New England-born Ellen G. White.

The new Adventism displayed many characteristics of the American sectarian world of the 19th century, not least the belief in charismatic prophetic leaders. The Seventh-day movement regards Saturday as the true Christian sabbath. Adventists follow older sectarian practice in avoiding meat, alcohol, and tobacco. These puritanical habits gave them a cranky image in the *Mad Men* era—until a series of

The Adventist adaptation

longitudinal studies from the 1950s onward showed just how highly beneficial those lifestyle practices were. Much of what we know today about the linkage between diet and health grows out of Adventist health and mortality studies. We also owe to Adventist dietary theories the notion that cereal is an ideal breakfast food.

In the mid-20th century, Seventh-day Adventists stood on the far fringe of the North American religious spectrum. Some evangelicals even challenged their Christian credentials, worried by what was seen as their excessive veneration for Ellen White and her writings. By the late 1950s, the church celebrated the fact that it had surpassed the milestone of a million adherents, the vast majority of whom were in the United States. No scholar of religion picked the church as destined for any major growth spurt.

How shortsighted such secular prophets were. Sixty years later, Adventists constitute a global church that plausibly claims 18 million members, only 7 percent of whom live in the United States. The transformation is in fact even greater than these rough figures suggest, as so many Adventists within the United States have ethnic roots in Africa or the Caribbean. Most of this change has occurred since about 1980.

The SDA Church includes some 75,000 churches spread over 200 countries. Latin America and the Caribbean account for almost 6 million believers, almost a third of the church's strength. Brazil is the country with the largest number of SDA members. Growth in Africa has also been spectacular. The church's East-Central Africa division reports 2.5 million members worshipping in 11,000 churches.

Apart from the numbers, the church has developed its rich network of educational institutions and media outlets around the world. Among its many colleges and universities, the largest in numerical terms is Northern Caribbean University, based in Jamaica. Medical schools and hospitals abound, which follows naturally from the long-standing Adventist commitment to health care.

When I meet an Adventist, I sometimes ask a semi-joking question as to how many relatives he or she has working in the medical professions. The answers are often lengthy. Adventist humanitarian and relief efforts are celebrated for their reach and efficiency.

The health and medicine theme goes far toward explaining Adventist successes worldwide. Any plausible account of emerging Global

South churches stresses the importance of healing activities, commonly framed in terms of spiritual warfare.

That does not mean that ordinary believers reject scientific medicine if they are given access to it. As part of their basic teachings, Adventists show believers how to improve their lives in physical terms as well as spiritual, and that practical message carries enormous weight in societies overwhelmed by disease and substance abuse. Faithfully following Adventist principles promises a major improvement in life chances and in longevity.

Any church has its share of scandals and controversies, and the Adventists are no exception. By far the worst blot on the movement's recent history was its experience in Rwanda, where some Adventist clergy were prominent in the genocide of the 1990s. This horrible experience raised critical questions about the depth and sincerity of conversion, in this country at least, and the need for fundamental Christian instruction.

Numbers alone, obviously, do not measure the growth of Christian faith. What they can tell us powerfully, though, is how churches adapt to the massive opportunities and challenges of globalization.

Philip Jenkins recently wrote The Many Face of Christ: The Thousand-Year Story of the Survival and Influence of the Lost Gospels.

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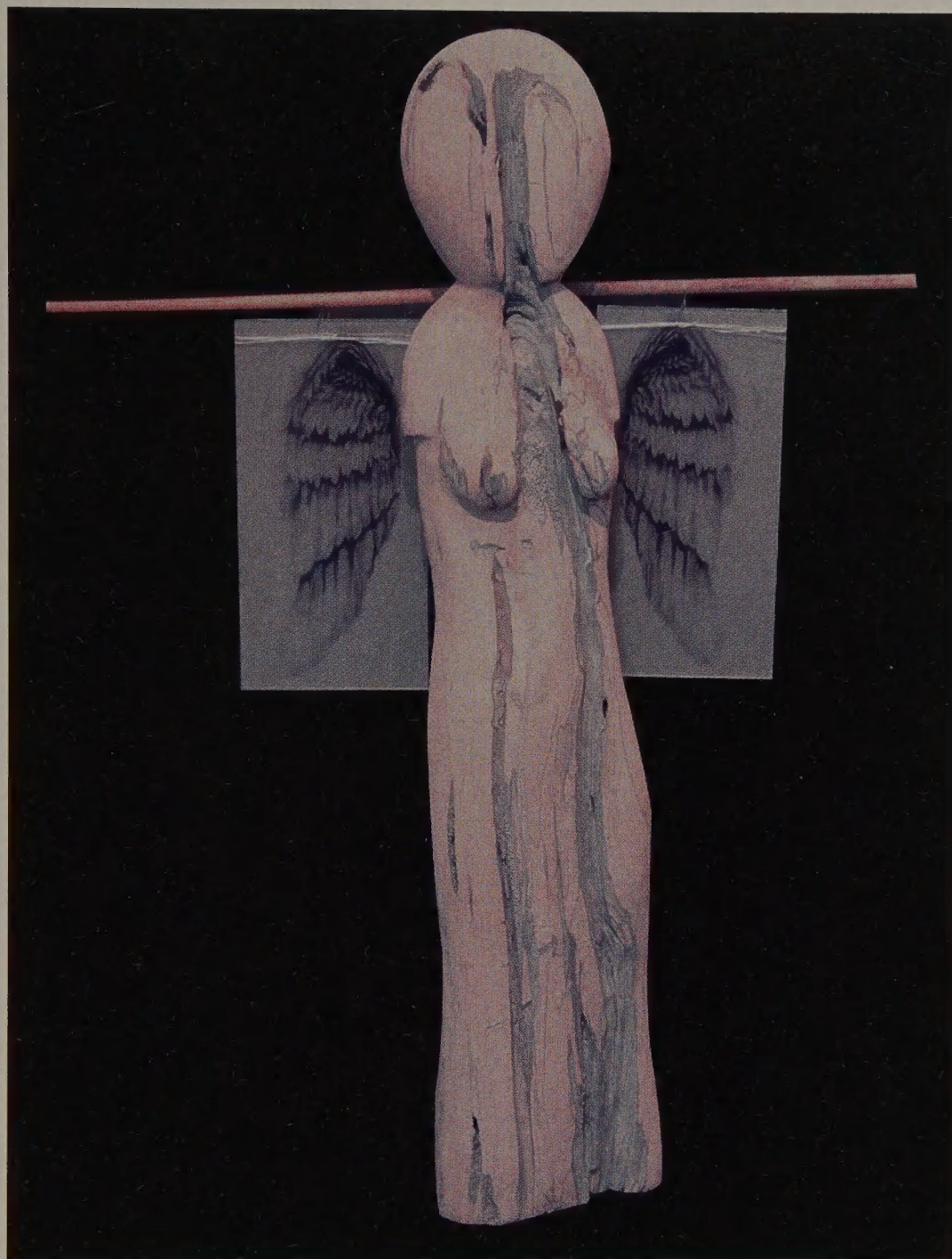
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Raziel, by Richard Carson

Richard Carson lives in New York's Hudson Valley, where he has observed barns collapsing under the weight of heavy snowfalls. He has reclaimed the wood from these barns and given it a second life in his work. While much of his work is building furniture, he also creates sculptures. *Raziel* is the name of the angel who, according to Jewish mystical traditions, provides Adam and Eve with the book that helps them return to God, giving them a second life.

Art selection and comment by Lil Copan, a painter and editor.

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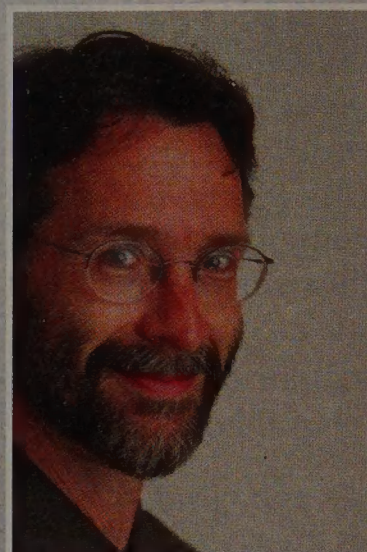


Photo by Jerry Hart

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Brian Doyle has been called "the most passionate Catholic storyteller in America." The author of many books of essays, fiction, and poetry, and a frequent contributor to the **CHRISTIAN CENTURY**, Doyle has won the Christopher Medal and a Catholic Press Association Book Award. He edits *Portland* magazine for the University of Portland, which Annie Dillard named as "the best spiritual magazine in the country."

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